
# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

# THESIS

**ENGAGE THE MEDIA: THE COAST GUARD'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS POSTURE DURING THE RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA**

by

Meredith Austin

March 2007

Thesis Advisor: Gail Thomas
Second Reader: Christopher Bellavita

**Approved for public release: distribution is unlimited**

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

| REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE | | | Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503. | | | |
| **1. AGENCY USE ONLY** ***(Leave blank)*** | **2. REPORT DATE** March 2007 | **3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED** Master's Thesis | |
| **4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE**: Engage the Media: Coast Guard's Public Affairs Posture During the Response to Hurricane Katrina | | | **5. FUNDING NUMBERS** |
| **6. AUTHOR(S)** Meredith Austin | | | |
| **7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)** Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000 | | | **8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER** |
| **9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)** N/A | | | **10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER** |
| **11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES** The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. | | | |
| **12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT** Approved for public release: distribution is unlimited. | | | **12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE** A |

**13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)**

During a crisis, one of the most important actions a government (specifically the federal executive branch) should take is to inform the public about the actions being taken to resolve the crisis, or steps the public should take to protect themselves as soon as possible. If the public does not believe the government understands what is occurring, they will not have confidence in the plans being made. Hurricane Katrina was a case in which the federal government failed to inform the public what positive steps it was taking to respond to the incident. As a result, the public perceived that there were no positive steps being taken at all, reducing the trust in the federal government. A notable exception was the Coast Guard, which received much praise in the media and by the public. This paper examines Coast Guard culture, its public affairs program and response frameworks, including the National Response Plan and the National Contingency Plan. Next, timelines of Hurricane Katrina activities show what actions were taken by different agencies, including the Coast Guard. Finally, reasons why the Coast Guard succeeded are given, along with a list of actions other agencies may take to improve their public affairs posture.

| **14. SUBJECT TERMS** Risk Communications, Crisis Communications, Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Coast Guard, Public Affairs, Media Relations | | | **15. NUMBER OF PAGES** 133 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | **16. PRICE CODE** |
| **17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT** Unclassified | **18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE** Unclassified | **19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT** Unclassified | **20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT** UL |

NSN 7540-01-280-5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239-18

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

**Approved for public release: distribution is unlimited**

# ENGAGE THE MEDIA: COAST GUARD'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS POSTURE DURING THE RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

Meredith L. Austin
Captain, United States Coast Guard
B.S., U.S. Coast Guard Academy, 1985
M.S.P.H., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1994

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(HOMELAND SECURITY AND DEFENSE)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
March 2007**

Author: Meredith Austin

Approved by: Gail Thomas
Thesis Advisor

Christopher Bellavita
Second Reader

Douglas Porch
Chairman, Department of National Security Affairs

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# ABSTRACT

During a crisis, one of the most important actions a government (specifically the federal executive branch) should take is to inform the public about the actions being taken to resolve the crisis, or steps the public should take to protect themselves as soon as possible. If the public does not believe the government understands what is occurring, they will not have confidence in the plans being made. Hurricane Katrina was a case in which the federal government failed to inform the public what positive steps it was taking to respond to the incident. As a result, the public perceived that there were no positive steps being taken at all, reducing the trust in the federal government. A notable exception was the Coast Guard, which received much praise in the media and by the public. This paper examines Coast Guard culture, its public affairs program and response frameworks, including the National Response Plan and the National Contingency Plan. Next, timelines of Hurricane Katrina activities show what actions were taken by different agencies, including the Coast Guard. Finally, reasons why the Coast Guard succeeded are given, along with a list of actions other agencies may take to improve their public affairs posture.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| ATC | Aviation Training Center |
| ATSDR | Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry |
| CG | Coast Guard |
| COOP | Continuity of Operations |
| COP | Common Operating Picture |
| D8 | Eighth Coast Guard District |
| DHS | Department of Homeland Security |
| DOD | Department of Defense |
| EOC | Emergency Operations Center |
| EPA | Environmental Protection Agency |
| ERT-A | Emergency Response Team-Advance |
| ERT-N | Emergency Response Team-National |
| ESF | Emergency Support Function |
| EXCOMS | External Communications |
| FEMA | Federal Emergency Management Agency |
| FOSC | Federal On-Scene Coordinator |
| HURCON | Hurricane Condition |
| ICS | Incident Command System |
| IMAT | Incident Management Assistance Team |
| IMT | Incident Management Team |
| JIC | Joint Information Center |
| JTF | Joint Task Force |
| MOPIC | Public Affair's Motion Picture & Television Liaison Office |
| MRE | Meals, Ready to Eat |
| MSIB | Marine Safety Information Bulletin |
| NCP | National Contingency Plan |
| NHC | National Hurricane Center |
| NIMS | National Incident Management System |
| NRP | National Response Plan |
| NRT | National Response Team |
| NTSB | National Transportation Safety Board |
| PA | Public Affairs Specialist |
| PADET | Public Affairs Detachment |
| PAO | Public Affairs Officer |
| PFO | Principal Federal Official |
| PIAT | Public Information Assist Team |
| PIER© | Public Information and Emergency Response |
| RP | Responsible Party |
| SAR | Search and Rescue |
| UMIB | Urgent Marine Information Bulletin |

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Hurricane Katrina caused widespread destruction to areas of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana in August 2005. The tireless efforts of volunteers, local, state and federal employees began before the storms winds reached the shores, and continue to this day. Some of those responding were victims themselves. Their dedication, caring and can-do spirit in the face of difficult working conditions, constant criticism and limited resources was inspiring.

This thesis could not have been completed without the assistance of many people. I'd like to thank Dr. Peter Sandman for his expertise on risk communications, Ms. Nancie Poppema for crisis media communications and Commander Jeff Carter on Coast Guard Media Relations policies. These individuals helped me to lay the foundation upon which to build the rest of the thesis. I would also like to acknowledge the many Coast Guard Public Affairs professionals who served during the response to the hurricane and gave me their first person accounts of what occurred, with a special thanks to Chief Warrant Officer Brandon Brewer of the Public Information Assist Team. Captains Jim Bjostad of Sector Mobile, Alabama and Frank Paskewich of Sector New Orleans, Louisiana who were both in the path of the storm and led the responses in the first critical hours/days/weeks provided me great insight on how incident commanders can and did integrate media relations into their operational missions. Admiral Thad Allen, who while officially representing DHS in his role as the Principal Federal Official and not the Coast Guard revealed how it was possible to be responsive to the media in the field while conforming to national strategic communications goals. I thank my family who kept cheering me on and the men and women of the National Strike Force who kept everything going during my trips to Monterey. I couldn't have done this without them. Finally, to the men and women of the Coast Guard, whose bravery, tenacity and compassion reminded me of how proud I am to be part of the team.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

During a crisis, one of the most important actions a government (specifically the federal executive branch) should take is to inform the public about the actions being taken to resolve the crisis, or steps the public should take to protect themselves as soon as possible. If the public does not believe the government understands what is occurring, they will not have confidence in the plans being made. It is not enough for the government to take actions; the public must be made aware that these actions are being taken on their behalf. If these important messages are not disseminated in a timely manner, the consequences can be very severe, ranging from additional numbers of casualties to the loss of trust in governmental institutions. This, of course, is much easier said than done.

While crisis communications experts agree that getting messages out to the public as quickly as possible is crucial, several significant barriers prevent this from happening. Some of these barriers are bureaucratic. For instance, many agencies require centralized control for message dissemination instead of allowing local personnel to speak directly to the media. Centralized messaging requires several levels of review starting with the local officials, all the way up to Washington, DC. This long chain of review can, make the release of information take too long. Another barrier is a lack of experience in crisis communications at the tactical level. Many agencies restrict which personnel in their organization may speak with the news media and when. As a result, most agency personnel have little practice in dealing with the media.

When a crisis happens requiring senior agency personnel to speak with the media (for instance, an agency administrator who due to the seriousness of the incident needs to directly address the media instead of a junior employee), they are unfamiliar of the needs of the media and will not deliver very effective messages. In addition, it is imperative that the public have some level of trust in a government agency prior to a crisis; otherwise messages during the crisis from that agency will be heard through a filter of

skepticism. Finally, a crisis requires a very high volume of agency communications, both internally and externally to other agencies and to the public. Unfortunately, the communications infrastructure may be inadequate to meet this increased need, or be destroyed by the incident outright, such as during a hurricane. Although many government agencies suffer in the media due to these factors, the Coast Guard (CG) enjoys a very positive reputation, both in the media and the public.

## B. RESEARCH QUESTION

What actions did the CG take in response to Hurricane Katrina to get its story out and receive such positive news coverage, and what are the implications for other federal agencies?

## C. PRACTICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

The CG enjoyed a positive reputation in the media and with the public in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, despite some operational difficulties which got little attention in the media. On the other hand, agencies that did good work were often portrayed negatively in the media. Taken to the extreme, if a catastrophic incident happens and the government's good works are not communicated to the public, the public will assume no good works are occurring and faith in the government will fail, which can threaten the strength and security of the nation. The end product of this research will be a set of recommendations for government officials to follow to help them get their messages out to the public through the media. This should increase the public's trust in the federal government, lower the stress of both responders and the public, and increase compliance with recommended actions. As an added benefit, a proactive approach allows federal agencies to get their story out to the public and deters a reporter from seeking others outside the agencies who are willing to speak on the topic (e.g., a disgruntled citizen with bad information). A proactive approach is often difficult because government agencies are distrustful of the media and may not be willing to take the steps necessary to meet the media "on their terms." However, since the role of government is to protect the public and the best way to get the government's message to the public is through the media, it is imperative that government agencies change their public affairs posture. This means

being proactive with the media and using effective crisis communications principles to increase their chances of having their messages disseminated effectively. An agency can improve its reputation with all of its stakeholders by improving its overall public affairs posture, not just during a crisis. The more agencies practice disseminating messages to different audiences during routine events, the better they will be at disseminating information during a crisis.

## D. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will cover four aspects of the research question:

- risk communication
- crisis communication
- government reports documenting the response to Hurricane Katrina
- the public perceptions of risk and the government's role in a crisis and the perception of the media

### 1. Risk Communication

#### *a. Definitions*

The field of risk communication, according to risk communication researcher and consultant Dr. Vincent Covello, is "a science-based approach for communicating effectively in high-concern, high stress emotionally charged, or controversial situations."[1] Many sources of information cover risk communication. Some sources are academic, covering research conducted to prove or disprove theories of human behavior Examples include an anthology of several studies edited by Dr. Paul Slovic, called, *The Perception of Risk*, as well as presentations by Dr. Vincent Covello and Dr. Peter Sandman.[2]

#### *b. Applied Risk Communication*

In addition to academic sources, others offer applied risk communications guidance. Most of these sources start by first discussing the theories of risk

[1] Dr. Vincent Covello, *Risk Communication Slides*, April, 2002, http://www.nwcphp.org/docs/pdf/april02color.pdf [accessed on October 19, 2005].

[2] Dr. Peter Sandman (Risk Communications consultant), telephonic interview with the author, on November 25, 2006.

communication and then provide practical advice for crafting effective messages. One of these sources is the very comprehensive general discussion book *Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks* by Regina Lundgren and Andrea McMakin.[3]

In addition, several websites cover theory as well as practical guidelines on how to put risk communications principles into practice. Examples include two excellent government websites, one from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) and one from the Department of Heath and Human Services.[4] The ATSDR website lists the topics as hyperlinks for quick access to short entries on each subject, complete with source of information. The DHHS website is the on-line PDF version of its publication, *Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials*. This publication has a lot of the same information as the ATSDR website, but with a little more detail.

### *c. Case Studies*

Another important subgroup of the risk communication literature is case *studies.* Websites and newspaper articles from sources such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* provide examples of poorly executed risk communications. Books also offer case studies of good and bad risk communications. A specific example is Robin Cohn's book, *PR Crisis Bible: How to Take Charge of the Media When all Hell Breaks Loose.* Although not specifically about risk communications, this PR consultant recounts many situations where private companies did not apply the guidelines of good risk communication and the problems that this caused. The book also details situations where the company did follow good risk communication practice and as a result, the company benefited.[5]

---

[3] Regina Lundgren and Andrea McMakin, *Risk Communication-A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risk* (Columbus: Battelle Press, 2004).

[4] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials* (Washington, D.C.:Department of Health and Human Services, 2002), 20, http://www.hhs.gov/od/documents/RiskCommunication.pdf [accessed on October 17, 2005].

[5] Robin Cohn, *The PR Crisis Bible: How to Take Charge of the Media When all Hell Breaks Loose* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 43.

### *d. Environmental Cases*

Another excellent source was the book by Powell and Leiss, two professors in environmental policy studies who have extensive experience with applying risk communication practices as when dealing with controversial environmental issues. In their book *Mad Cows and Mother's Milk—The Perils of Poor Risk Communication*, they recount many instances where the governments of England, Canada and the US did not follow risk communications guidelines and as a result caused its citizens anxiety, cost various industries millions of dollars and resulted in each country's citizens to lose trust in their respective governments.[6]

## 2. Requirement to Communicate with the Public

Several documents including official plans and regulations require the US government to communicate to the public while employing the principles of risk communication. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency, as listed in Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 25, is required to have public participation in several regulatory processes dealing with the cleanup of hazardous waste sites.

## 3. Joint Information Center

The National Response Team, required by the National Contingency Plan (40 CFR 300), has developed a *Joint Information Center Model*, also known as the JIC Manual for use during incidents where a Joint Information Center or JIC has been set up to disseminate information to the public.[7] More information on the JIC will be provided in Chapter II.

## 4. National Response Plan

Another government plan that discusses the need for JICs and the timely dissemination of understandable messages to the public is found in the National Response

---

[6] Douglas Powell and William Leiss, *Mad Cows and Mother's Milk-The Perils of Poor Risk Communication* (Quebec City: McGill-Queen's University Press ,1997), 3.

[7] The National Response Team, *Joint Information Center Model*, (Washington, DC: The National Response Team, 2000), ix, http://www.uscg.mil/hq/nsfweb/download/JIC%20MANUAL.pdf [accessed October 26, 2005].

Plan (NRP). Public information is addressed in two places in the NRP: the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15 Annex and the Public Affairs Support Annex. ESF #15 has undergone significant changes in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, providing more "how to" information to personnel who would have to perform this function. Unfortunately, these publications are still quite new and personnel will need to use it on several more incidents to ensure they are familiar with its requirements and can therefore make suggestions on improving the process in the future. Until people become more proficient in the documents' requirements, any shortcomings will be harder to identify and resolve before a disaster strikes as to what measures the government will take to protect them.[8]

Taken together, these sources give a good background in the theory of risk communication and the practical guidelines available for risk communication practitioners. What is in short supply from the literature is practical guidance on getting messages through to the public during high risk, high concern incidents, such as a major natural disaster or terrorist events. When emotions are running high, messages must be communicated effectively to the public to assure them actions are being taken quickly by the government to mitigate the damage and save lives. In addition, the federal government needs to improve the process in the NRP on getting well-crafted messages out to the public in a timely manner. The current construct of the ESF #15 and Public Affairs Support Annex does not ensure timely dissemination. The National Response Team's Joint Information Center Method appears to be a viable solution to the problem of multiple agencies issuing conflicting information to the public. Risk communication is a field that needs further study to develop additional practical guidelines for crisis and emergency risk communications scenarios.

### 5. Crisis Communications

Crisis communication is a subset of risk communication where there is a high consequence event, such as an earthquake and extremely high interest by the public. The literature states it is important to understand why crisis communications is different from both the typical type of risk communication undertaken by the government/industry to

[8] White House, *Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina*, (Washington DC: White House, 2006), 109, http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/appendix-a.html [accessed May 20, 2006].

reassure stakeholders and routine external communications undertaken by the government/public relations personnel to inform stakeholders on a non controversial/time critical subject to ensure the appropriate messages are crafted. Two different definitions of crisis communication were found in the literature and are given below.

### *a. Dr. Sandman: Risk = Hazard + Outrage*

Where hazard is the actual probability that something can hurt you and outrage is everything that makes a person *perceive* that activity or exposure can harm you.[9] The strength of the outrage (low to high) in relation to the strength of the hazard (low to high) determines the category of risk communication techniques that should be followed. For example, if the hazard is high, but the outrage is low, such as in the case of smoking, the risk communication strategy to be used is health education, where the communicator attempts to raise the outrage (i.e., make the person realize the true hazard instead of the perceived hazard of the activity) to help them realize they should quit smoking. Situations which are high hazard, high outrage, such as a natural disaster, call for crisis communications techniques, to alert people as to the actions they should take to protect themselves and assure the public that actions are being taken to protect them. In other words, crisis communications is a subset of risk communications.[10]

### *b. Public Relations Definition*

According to several articles from private public relations professionals and government agencies, a crisis is defined as an event that demands a quick response.[11] The event can be a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, or man made, such as a scandal, industrial accident or terror attack. A key element of a crisis is that it poses a risk to the reputation of the business or government agency if it is not managed properly.[12] The articles state that part of managing a crisis is having an effective communications plan

---

[9] Lundgren and McMakin, *Risk Communication*, 21.

[10] Sandman interview, Nov 25, 2005.

[11] James E. Lukaszewski, *Seven Dimensions of Crisis Communication Management: A Strategic Analysis and Planning Model*, 1998, http://www.e911.com/monos/A001.html [accessed December 2006].

[12] U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs, *Crisis Communications*, http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/pressoffice/crisis.htm [accessed December 16, 2006].

which covers all affected stakeholders, including employees and the public. Whatever the cause, it is critical for organizations to understand that if they fail to respond and communicate "in ways that meet community standards and expectations [it] will result in…negative outcomes."[13]

Many public and private sector public relations consultants have written guidance on what to do before, during and after a crisis, regardless of the cause. This guidance is summarized below:

**Before a crisis**

- Develop and maintain a relationship with the media to gain each other's trust
- Designate spokespeople and give those personnel media training
- Exercise the plan, modify as necessary
- Ensure crisis communications needs are integrated into other crisis management plans

**During a crisis**

- Get information out to the media as soon as possible
- Update media often
- Find ways to provide access to media, including embeds, pools, desk space
- Get key leadership of organization in front of media as appropriate
- Be empathetic—acknowledge outrage of public
- Do not lie
- Admit mistakes and steps being taken to fix them
- Do not forget to keep internal customers informed. Any member in an organization is potentially a spokesperson. Ensure they have the most up to date information
- Do what is necessary to get the message out i.e., if the normal infrastructure is destroyed, find another way—Internet, text messaging, runners

**After a crisis**

- Capture any lessons learned
- Apply lessons learned to improve crisis communications plan

[13] Lukaszewski, *Seven Dimensions of Crisis Communication Management*.

The most important aspect of crisis communications is for an organization's leadership to realize that regardless of the steps that organization is taking to mitigate a crisis, if the public is not informed of those steps, or if the public's outrage is not reduced, then the public will perceive the organization's actions as too little, too late. Crisis communications must be integrated into the overall response effort from the beginning in order for the response to be perceived as effective.

Finally, several sources discussed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which claims that an organization's past history of how it dealt with crises affects the threat to its reputation when a new crisis occurs. [14] Other papers discussed the importance of establishing relationships with the media prior to a crisis and the need to focus on the public when crafting a crisis communication strategy.[15]

### 6. Government Reports on the Response to Hurricane Katrina

The reports reviewed for this literature review include the reports from both houses of Congress and the White House. These reports to various degrees point out shortcomings at all branches of government in their responses to Hurricane Katrina. Each of the reports discusses the lack of a comprehensive public information/crisis communication plan. For example, the U.S. House of Representatives report stated that "both the message and the messengers were ineffective before and after Katrina…Federal, state and local officials did not have a unified strategy for communicating with the public."[16]

---

[14] W. Timothy Coombs, "Impact of Past Crises on Current Crisis Communication," *Journal of Business Communication* 41, no. 3 (2004): 265.

[15] Hua-Hsin Wan, Michael Pfau, "The Relative Effectiveness of Inoculation, Bolstering, and Combined Approaches in Crisis Communication," *Journal of Public Relations Research* 16, no. 3 (2004): 301.

[16] U.S. House of Representatives, *A Failure of Initiative, The Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina*, (Washington DC: 2006), 361,http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/15feb20061230/www.gpoaccess.gov/katrinareport/conclusion.pdf [accessed May 20, 2006].

### 7. Public Perceptions

One of the interesting areas of study covered in the literature is public perception of risk. In other words, how risky does the public think certain activities are and therefore, should the public be concerned about them?

#### *a. Subjective Nature of Risk*

In the literature, there are sources that discuss how people assess risks and compare that to the actual risks posed by that activity. When researchers compared the two ranking lists, they found very little correlation between them.[17] The researchers then posited reasons for why the risk perception of the public was so different from the true risk. Drs Slovic, Covello and Sandman all identify factors that can affect outrage, as defined in the section above, which they use to explain why people's risk perception does not correlate with the actual risk.[18]

#### *b. Social Amplification*

Other research papers show that the perception of risk is affected by the interactions people have with other people and their place in society. This "social amplification" theory states when a risk occurs or threatens to occur, people's risk perception are influenced by the reaction and actions of others.[19] Other papers examined the influence of the entertainment industry in their portrayal of government agencies effectiveness on the public's perception on those government agencies.[20] For example, a

---

[17] Paul Slovic, "Perception of Risk," *The Perception of Risk* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2000), 222.

[18] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Communicating in a Crisis*, 30.

[19] Lundgren and McMakin, *Risk Communication*, 237.

[20] Defense Threat Reduction Agency, et. al., *Human Behavior and WMD Crisis/Risk Communication Workshop-Final Report* (n.p. :DTRA, 2001), 24, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dtra/human-behavior-wmd.pdf [accessed February 1, 2006].

review of the Internet shows many articles on the "CSI Effect" and how it has given the public an unrealistic expectation of every police department to have advanced technical crime-fighting equipment at its disposal.[21]

### *c. UnrealisticExpectations*

To expand on this further, several sources discuss the public's unrealistic expectation that the government will take care of them in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.[22] In addition, data from several statistically significant surveys showing that despite disasters being fresh in people's minds, a minority of surveyed adults have prepared their families for a disaster. Paradoxically, despite the expectation that government will take care of them, other studies show that the public does not trust the government.[23]

While a lot of data show how people perceive risk for many routine activities (e.g., driving, smoking), there needs to be more research on how they view their risk for injury/death by less frequent, high consequence events, such as natural disasters or terrorism events.[24] In addition, it would be helpful to gauge their perception on the capability of the government to provide certain services, such as food/water/ice delivery (i.e., how many days after the incident should supplies arrive?). This information would set a baseline of expectations from which both the government and public could better manage requirements of the government and local populace and therefore set realistic expections.

---

[21] Stefan Lovgren**, "**CSI Effect' Is Mixed Blessing for Real Crime Labs," *National Geographic News* (Washington DC: National Geographic News, 2004), http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/09/0923_040923_csi.html [accessed February 4, 2006].

[22] Hurricane Isabel Assessment Team, *An Assessment: Virginia's Response to Hurricane Isabel*,(Arlington: Hurricane Isabel Assessment Team, 2003), 4, http://pub.sysplan.com/Hurricane_Isabel_Assessment_Exec_Summary.pdf [accessed February 4, 2006].

[23] Defense Threat Reduction Agency, et. al.,3.

[24] Paul Slovic, Baruch Fischhoff and Sarah Lichtenstein, "Rating the Risks," *The Perception of Risk* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2000), 104.

## E. PERCEPTION OF THE MEDIA

A good deal of literature exists on perceptions of the news media. One of the themes in surveys and papers dealt with the idea that reporters are less objective in their reporting and instead are siding with the subject they are covering.[25] Another theme found in the literature dealt with the business aspect of the news media. Interviews done with reporters show that they believe that "bottom line" pressure is significantly affecting the quality of news coverage.[26] Reporters surveyed also said they self-censored themselves on stories for various reasons, such as believing the story is complicated, boring, or "because they conflict with organizational interests."[27]

The "24/7" nature of the modern news industry has significantly shortened the amount of time between when news happens and when it is disseminated to the public. Several sources have commented as to what this means to the quality, or veracity of the news as presented to the public.[28]

Several articles, surveys and editorials discuss the bias (or lack thereof) of the news media, with the implication that this determines what is covered and what is not and how. Finally, the literature contained editorials both asserting and arguing against the impact of the media on public perception. These were not included in this review because it was not possible to determine if the sources were conducting legitimate study or just giving their opinion based on their agendas. The current state of the media will be covered in much more detail in Chapter II.

---

[25] E. L. Quarantelli, *The Role of the Mass Communication System in natural and Technological Disasters and possible Extrapolation to Terrorism Situations*, (Newark: Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware, 2002), http://dspace.udel.edu:8080/dspace/bitstream/19716/595/1/PP2122.pdf [accessed February 1, 2006].

[26] Pew Center for the People and the Press, *Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists*, (Washington, DC: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2004), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=214 [accessed February 2, 2006].

[27] Pew Center for the People and the Press, *Self Censorship: How Often and Why: Journalists Avoiding The News*, (Washington, DC: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2000), http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=39 [accessed February 2, 2006].

[28] The Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2005*, (Washington, DC: The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005), http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2005/index.asp [accessed February 4, 2006].

## F. TENTATIVE SOLUTIONS OR ANSWERS

Several hypotheses will be tested in this thesis and are listed below:

1. Public officials should establish open, proactive relationships with the media now in order to build trust before a disaster strikes.
2. It is possible for government agencies to disseminate effective crisis communications messages to the public, even if normal methods to do so are disrupted due to damage to infrastructure.
3. The Coast Guard's public affairs model, including the use of the Joint Information Center (JIC) works to get effective messages to the public.

## G. METHODOLOGY

In addition to the literature review, interviews were conducted with several groups of professionals to get the most up to date information on crisis communication methodology and the state of the media, as well as to document what activities the CG took, both operationally and to disseminate its messages to the public. These groups were as follows:

- CG Operational Commanders
- CG Public Affairs personnel
- Other DHS agency Public Affairs personnel
- Crisis Communication/Media Consultants
- Television and Print Reporters and Producers

Finally, various lessons learned reports and storm response narratives were reviewed to reconstruct timelines showing the storm's path and the actions taken by various agencies including the CG.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# II. BACKGROUND

This chapter provides a baseline on pre-storm policies and procedures followed by the Coast Guard (CG) the news media and other agencies in serving the public. This information will help the reader understand how the response to Hurricane Katrina was a direct consequence of these prior factors. The following subjects are covered:

- CG culture
- CG public affairs policy
- State of the news media
- Joint Information Center Model

## A. CG CULTURE

### 1. Introduction

The CG is a military, multi-mission maritime service and the smallest of the nation's five armed forces. "Team Coast Guard" consists of a workforce comprised of 39,000 Active Duty, 8,100 Reserve and 7000 civilian members. In addition, 31,000 members of the CG Auxiliary volunteer to conduct boating safety classes, perform search and rescue (SAR) and engage in other non-law enforcement CG missions. The CG performs its missions with an Active Duty force smaller than the New York City Police Department. The CG's eleven mission areas include: SAR, ports, waterways and coastal security, illegal drug interdiction, undocumented migrant interdiction, defense readiness, enforcement of laws and treaties, living marine resources (fisheries protection), aids to navigation (i.e., marking navigable waterways to help mariners navigate safely within them), ice operations (domestic and polar), marine environmental protection and response and marine safety.[29] While other agencies had difficulties meeting the demands of preparing for and responding to Hurricane Katrina, the CG was able to rise to the occasion. The CG performed its duties in a professional and heroic manner, despite the

[29] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Coast Guard: Observations on the Preparation, Response, and Recovery Missions Related to Hurricane Katrina, (*Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, July 2006), 8, http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06903.pdf [accessed October 29, 2006].

fact that the Gulf Coast-based crews were also victims, losing their homes and belongings in the storm. The reason why the CG was able to operate so admirably in preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina can be found in the organization's history and culture.

### 2. CG History

The history of the CG begins in 1790, when the Revenue Marine (later called the Revenue Cutter Service) was established to collect customs duties for the fledgling nation. Over the years, the Revenue Cutter Service received new duties, either by merging with or absorbing other existing agencies, or by being given additional mandates from Congress.[30] Sometimes these additional mandates were accompanied by additional resources, but many times the Revenue Cutter Service found a way to absorb the new duties with existing resources, finding novel ways to increase unit productivity.

The modern CG was created in 1915, when the Revenue Cutter Service (responsible for the enforcement of laws and treaties) merged with the Lifesaving Service. In the ensuing years, other agencies were brought under the CG: Lighthouse Service (Aids to Navigation), Bureau of Navigation and Steamboat Inspection Service (Commercial Vessel Safety). At first, the CG was under the Department of Treasury, but was moved to the new Department of Transportation in 1967. In 1973 with the passage of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, the CG was given the responsibility for marine environmental protection and response to spills in the coastal environment. In 2003, the CG became part of the newly created Department of Homeland Security. As can be seen from above, the missions of the CG have continued to evolve over the entire history of the organization. As technology and societal/geopolitical forces have changed, from sails to steam to diesel, from smuggling rum to smuggling cocaine to smuggling weapons and from cleaning up oils spills to cleaning up anthrax contamination, the one constant in the CG is change.

The *Coast Guardsman's Manual*, the first book given to every recruit, officer candidate and cadet to begin their indoctrination into the CG, emphasizes the multi-

[30] U.S. Coast Guard, *Coast Guard Publication 1, U.S. Coast Guard: America's Maritime Guardian* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January 2002), 2, http://www.uscg.mil/top/about/doc/uscg_pub1_complete.pdf [accessed October 29, 2006].

mission and frequently evolving nature of the CG as one of its great strengths, moving forward instead of just maintaining relatively static missions as some other agencies do.[31] Indeed, an unofficial motto of the CG is "Semper Gumby"—always flexible. This predisposition for change exists throughout the service. Every level of the organization understands that circumstances may necessitate a change of operating procedures, personnel complements of units, even changing what missions will be performed by a given unit. For instance, instead of completing an assigned pollution over-flight mission, an aircraft may be diverted for a law enforcement mission. While this can be disorienting and stress inducing when one is new to the organization, most CG personnel get used to it and in fact become a bit restless if a situation becomes too routine.[32]

### 3. CG Organization

The CG is considered one of the five branches of the military, the only one not under the Department of Defense and is not subject to the limitations of Posse Commitatus. As a result, the CG is authorized to perform law enforcement missions within the United States. CG assets, including vessels, aircraft and response personnel, are organized geographically. Starting at the top is CG Headquarters in Washington, DC. From there, the CG is split operationally into the Atlantic and Pacific Areas, each under the command of a Vice Admiral. Continuing down the chain of command, it is broken into Districts (five Districts in Atlantic Area, four in Pacific Area), with each District commanded by a Rear Admiral. Depending on the type of operational asset, it is either considered a District Asset (controlled at the District level), or an Area asset (controlled at the Area level). For example, an air station flying helicopters takes orders from a District, while a 378 foot cutter takes orders from its respective Area. Major operational shore commands are called Sectors. A wide range of activities, including small boat operations, law enforcement, search and rescue, vessel inspection, port operations and pollution response activities are all performed by Sector personnel.

[31] Captain George Kreitemeyer, *The Coast Guardsman's Manual*, Eighth Ed., (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 4.

[32] Author's experience: I received orders to attend a school 1500 miles from the ship on which I was stationed when I was a brand new Ensign. Although I had a plane ticket, I had neither lodging, nor transportation when I got there. The expectation was for me to take care of those things myself, despite not knowing military transportation procedures. I quickly learned.

Support units, providing assistance to operational units such as electronic support and vessel maintenance support are also broken down geographically, but have a different chain of command. Starting with Headquarters, the next level is the Maintenance Logistics Command (MLC) Atlantic or Pacific. Support units take orders from their respective MLC. Finally, there are Headquarters units. These units serve the entire CG and are not broken down geographically. Headquarters units include training centers, aircraft maintenance facilities the Finance Center and the National Strike Force.

### 4. The CG is a Multi-Mission Organization at All Levels

Individual CG units typically perform more than one mission. For instance, a cutter on fisheries patrol in the Pacific Ocean will also conduct illegal migrant or drug interdiction missions during the course of her patrol. During that patrol the cutter may receive a distress call to remove and bring to treatment an injured crewmember from a fish processing vessel. A CG Sector office, responsible for CG activities in port areas frequently has to conduct "surge operations" for a short period of increased security concerns. In that case, personnel who would normally conduct non-emergent activities such as facility or vessel inspections would instead don body armor and weapons to conduct security boardings on high interest vessels. To facilitate this multi-mission nature, CG platforms are designed to be functional in more than one mission area. For instance, the JUNIPER classed Buoy Tenders have an oil recovery system installed aboard to allow the vessel to become an oil skimming vessel in case of a major oil spill.

This multi-mission functionality also applies to CG personnel. Enlisted specialties in the CG typically encompass the skills and knowledge required by several different specialties in the Navy. This is not to say that CG personnel are twice as smart as Navy personnel; since the CG has fewer and smaller vessels and fewer people than the Navy, it probably made sense to combine similar specialties into one. In addition, the CG does not have separate communities for commissioned officers as does the other services. All officers in the CG are line officers. Therefore, an officer might be commanding a ship during one tour of duty and be assigned as the chief of personnel at a district office

the next. As a result, CG personnel are trained to perform a large variety of missions and realize they may be called upon to perform additional duties at any time.

### 5. CG Core Values

The CG's core values are Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. CG personnel honor those who have come before them and are proud of the rich legacy of the CG. CG personnel have respect for both their superiors and their subordinates, following orders given to them while at the same time ensuring the needs of those whom they lead are met. Finally, CG personnel understand that they are to complete their duties to the best of their abilities until the job is done. This "can do" spirit is expected and encouraged at all levels in the organization. This devotion is what keeps people going despite lack of sleep and food under tough physical conditions. It is what enables lives to be saved.

### 6. Principles of CG Operations

Despite the many different missions performed by CG personnel, they all follow seven principles of operations in the execution of their duties:

#### *a. Clear Objective*

Objectives are provided to all personnel so that they understand exactly what it is they are trying to achieve. Clear objectives up and down the chain of command ensure no effort is wasted on work items that do not help to meet the objective.

#### *b. Effective Presence*

Part of the CG's effectiveness comes from being visible in the port community, on the high seas and in the air. To be able to respond in a timely manner and to assure the public that they are being protected, the CG patrols the areas for which it is responsible, ensuring coverage in case of emergent need.

#### *c. Unity of Effort*

This can mean three things. First, all CG personnel in a unit should work together to make the unit effective. Second, all CG units must follow the same Standard

Operating Procedures and use interoperable equipment to ensure all units can work together efficiently and effectively. Last, the CG must frequently work with other agencies. This can mean working with Department of Defense (DOD) assets, working with various local, state and federal agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations and private industry. The CG units must be able to work together with all of the agencies within its area of responsibility. The fact that many CG personnel are able to operate easily with both DOD and non-DOD assets make the CG invaluable as a bridge between those two cultures.

#### *d. On-Scene Initiative*

Many CG operations are of an emergent nature, e.g., oil spill, search and rescue. It is not effective to have to wait an hour or more for orders prior to launching a small boat to pick up distressed boaters. Therefore, the CG has delegated both authority and responsibility to the lowest level possible. The person on scene is expected to assess the situation and have the initiative to take necessary actions.[33]

#### *e. Flexibility*

As mentioned above, the CG is a multi-mission organization with relatively few resources to conduct them. Flexibility is the key to getting all of the missions accomplished.

#### *f. Managed Risk*

A lot of the work done by CG personnel can be dangerous. Indeed, many celebrated rescues came at significant personal danger to the rescuers. That being said, since the CG is so small, its leaders must always conduct a risk assessment to see if it is safe to undertake a hazardous activity. If the equipment and conditions are not within safe parameters, the mission is scrubbed. CG personnel are highly trained and motivated to save lives, so the bias is to go unless the risk of conducting the mission far outweighs the potential benefit.

[33] *Coast Guard Publication 1*, 52.

### *g. Restraint*

The CG is a law enforcement and military organization and has very broad authorities and wide sweeping jurisdiction. CG personnel are instructed on the proper use of these authorities and not to abuse them.

CG personnel are trained to have a bias for action. They are taught to constantly ask "now what" and "what if" questions to help them anticipate what might happen next. Coasties are trained to be problem solvers; if plan A will not work, there had better be a plan B and maybe C and D. As a military service with civil responsibilities, CG personnel frequently work with other federal, state and local agencies in joint operations, learning to form cohesive teams with many different players. Since the CG must be nimble in order to successfully complete missions, flexibility and on scene initiative is taught to CG personnel from the first day in order for them to be effective when they join the fleet after training. Given this background, it is no surprise that good decisions get made and executed in unpredictable situations by CG personnel on the scene of an emergency or a crisis.[34]

## B. PUBLIC AFFAIRS

### 1. Introduction

The CG has a very aggressive public affairs posture. The CG leadership expects all personnel, from the Commandant down to very junior enlisted personnel to be proactive in telling the CG's story.[35]

The CG's Public Affairs Manual (Commandant Instruction M5728.2C) states on its first page that "A robust public affairs program is essential to the CG's success in every mission area."[36] The CG public affairs program includes media relations, community relations and internal communications (passing information to CG

[34] *Coast Guard Publication 1*, 53.

[35] Chief Warrant Officer Brandon Brewer (Public Information Assist Team leader), interview with the author, Elizabeth City, North Carolina, July 26, 2006.

[36] U.S. Coast Guard, *Commandant Instruction M5728.2C: The Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 2001), 1-1, http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/directives/CIM/CIM_5728_2C.pdf [accessed May 20, 2006].

personnel). Of the three, the largest concentration of resources is on media relations.[37] The objective of the media relations program is to have maximum disclosure of information with minimum delay. This way, the media get the story from the CG directly, instead of getting it from other sources. This improves the likelihood that information reported to the public will be accurate.

The CG's Public Affairs Program has five primary objectives. They are:

- Keeping the American public informed about the CG's ongoing operations and programs, thereby fostering understanding and support for all our missions.
- Making our world a better place to serve and live by taking an active role in community activities and challenges.
- Helping Coast Guard leadership attract, motivate and retain highly professional people to continue our tradition of dedicated quality service to the country.
- Helping save lives by educating and informing the American public, thus reducing accidents and casualties.
- Educating elected and public officials of the Coast Guard's role in their community and nation for continued healthy fiscal support for our service.[38]

### 2. Coast Guard Public Affairs Organization

The Coast Guard has a formal public affairs organization at all levels, beginning at Coast Guard Headquarters and ending with each individual member of Team Coast Guard. Starting at the Headquarters level, there is the Governmental and Public Affairs Directorate, which in addition to providing outreach to elected officials also drafts overall public affairs policy, provides assistance to Coast Guard public affairs personnel at lower levels in the organization (e.g., Areas, Districts and even field Public Affairs personnel) and handles high level media inquiries, among its duties.[39]

The next level in the Coast Guard organization is the Area and District Public Affairs offices (Atlantic Area and Pacific Area). Dedicated public affairs staffs are

[37] Brewer interview, December 15, 2006.

[38] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 1-1.

[39] Ibid., 1-3.

located at these Area and District offices, to serve the Area/District Commanders and to provide public affairs assistance to the units which come under them. Most Districts have further broken this down to Public Affairs Detachments (PADETs) to be more responsive to the field units and the media.

In addition, the CG has a career specialty (rating) for enlisted personnel known as Public Affairs Specialists (PA). In order to maximize the chance of success, prior to being selected to be a PA, a candidate is interviewed and must produce some sample photographs and written stories. If the person is deemed to have the potential and temperament to perform well independently (PAs may have to work in independent duty situations with little oversight, especially during large incidents), they are selected.[40] These personnel receive the same public affairs, media relations, electronic news gathering, journalism, photography and Internet publishing skills at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) in Ft Meade, MD, as other military public affairs personnel. Some PAs may receive intermediate or advanced-level training in desktop publishing, website design, electronic imagery, digital photography, crisis media relations and mass communications.[41] The notable difference between the CG's dedicated Public Affairs personnel (officer and enlisted) and other military agencies is the scope of work each person is expected to accomplish. For instance, a DOD public affairs specialist may be involved in only one of the following activities—taking pictures, writing articles or speaking on camera with the media. A CG public affairs specialist is expected to do all three.

Like the rest of the CG, the restriction on available resources requires public affairs specialists to "multi-task." They do not have the luxury to concentrate on one area or another. While they may not have the depth of expertise in any one aspect of public affairs, they are expected to be flexible enough to do what is needed. In addition, in the other services, public affairs specialists typically work behind the scenes, leaving any in front of camera work to more senior personnel. In the CG, as soon as a PA completes

[40] U.S. Coast Guard, *Commandant Instruction 1514.1, Public Affairs Specialist "A" School Candidate Screening Process* (Washington, D.C.U.S. Coast Guard: Jun 24, 2005), 1.

[41] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 1-10.

initial training, they are assigned to a Public Affairs office and has the potential to appear on camera that day.[42] The CG gives great responsibility to its enlisted PAs. For example, they will brief very senior officers, a job typically performed by commissioned officers in other services.[43]

PAs are stationed at each Area and District offices and at PADETs in major ports around the country. In addition, the CG has a Public Information Assist Team (PIAT). PIAT was initially established to provide public affairs support to Federal On-Scene Coordinators responding to oil and hazardous materials spills, but has expanded to provide assistance for high interest, crisis communications type incidents, including terrorist attacks and natural disasters. PIAT works out of the National Strike Force Coordination Center in Elizabeth City, North Carolina and is available to support other federal agencies in addition to the CG.[44] In all, there are approximately 123 officers, enlisted and civilian CG personnel dedicated full time to the public affairs mission.[45]

### 3. If You Own It, You Can Talk About It

While most of the groundwork for interviews, e.g., arranging interviews, giving background information and fact checking is performed by dedicated public affairs personnel, much of the on- air interaction between the media and the CG does not happen with them. Instead of acting as the sole CG spokespeople, dedicated public affairs personnel act as facilitators to bring the media together with the actual operators in the field. Therefore, CG personnel at the local level are taught almost from the day they join to speak about what they know directly to the media. In practice, the unit Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge are responsible for establishing a unit's public affairs program. The unit commanders will typically name a collateral (part time) duty Public Affairs Officer (PAO) to act as the liaison between the unit and the media and act as the

[42] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

[43] Ibid.

[44] U.S. EPA, *National Contingency Plan, 40 CFR 300.145(a)(3),* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 2000) http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getcfr.cgi?TITLE=40&PART=300&SECTION=145&YEAR=2000&TYPE=TEXT [accessed December 1, 2006].

[45] Brewer interview, 15 December, 2006.

commander's spokesperson when appropriate. In order for the PAO to be successful in the position, the CG has several training opportunities to help them. One is the CG Public Affairs Officer's Course at DINFOS. For those unable to attend that class, DINFOS instructors travel around the country to offer an abbreviated media relations course. Additionally, public affairs specialists from the Areas, Districts and PIAT provide media relations training as requested by unit commanders. During incidents with small to moderate media interest, the PAO will be dedicated to public affairs duties, arranging interviews, providing visuals to reporters and answering questions. For larger incidents, dedicated public affairs specialists will be brought in if needed.

The CG expects each individual CG member to be a CG spokesperson for activities that come under that person's purview. For a dramatic rescue, the unit will strive to have the rescue swimmer or pilot interviewed by a reporter, instead of the PAO.[46] Personnel are encouraged to speak on the record about what they know. The unit Commanding Officer is expected to arrange for media relations training for all personnel who might be expected to be put in front of a microphone, to enable them to speak with confidence within the unit's policy guidelines. In fact, knowing how to interact with the public and the media is so elemental to the CG that some form of media relations training is given at each of the CG's accession points (Boot Camp, Officer Candidate School and the Academy), as well as embedded in other advanced CG training courses.[47]

CG personnel may speak with the media many times during their career. They might first speak as the coxswain who conducted a rescue mission, then years later as the PAO describing a unit Open House and later still as a Sector Commander about a complicated oil spill. They learn about deadlines and the importance of providing compelling visuals. They give their subordinates opportunities to speak with the media themselves. As a result, by the time a CG member has reached senior positions within

[46] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 1-9

[47] Author's experience: I have received formal media relations training 5 times over the past 21 years. The training was always different, each more advanced than the last.

the organization, they realize the importance of speaking to the public and the media and are amenable to meeting deadlines/needs of media—and having their junior personnel participate as they did years earlier.

Finally, CG personnel are expected to be knowledgeable about the service, because "Well-informed members are more confident, more successful, more resourceful and make the best public representatives of our service."[48]

### 4. CG Media Relation Policy

The CG policy is for its personnel to provide information to the public quickly with only a few exceptions. Area, District and unit commanders and individual CG personnel generally are strongly encouraged to release news of their activities to the media without prior approval from higher authority.[49] To make it even easier for unit commanders to conduct media outreach, unit commanders, in most cases, have the authority to embark media aboard their unit, vessels and aircraft without prior notification to, or approval from, district or Headquarters. The straightforward guidance provided to every CG member is "If you do it or are responsible for something, you can talk about it."[50]

As stated earlier, from the time a person graduates from Boot Camp or Officer Accession point until they leave the service, they can expect to be interviewed at least once in their career.[51] To be fair, if a CG person is not comfortable speaking with the media they are not forced to do so, but if they do not want to, they are expected to pass the request for the interview up their chain of command to ensure someone does. The media policy also states that information that might show the CG in an unflattering light may not be withheld. Instead, maximum disclosure of the information (within the

[48] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 1-10

[49] Ibid., 2-2.

[50] Ibid., 2-10.

[51] Author's experience: The first time I was interviewed as a member of the Coast Guard was as a cadet in 1982. As an Ensign, I was thrown in front of the TV cameras as soon as my ship was moored at the dock to assist the media with covering the story of how a crewmember was killed at sea two days earlier. In conducting interviews with other Coast Guard personnel, I discovered my experience was not all that unusual.

confines of pending investigations) should be made with minimum delay, as bad news does not get better with age.[52] Generally, CG personnel are trusted by the media because they are responsive and tell the truth, warts and all.[53] For example, when the formal investigation into the deaths of two CG divers was completed, the full report was first released to the families of the divers and then was posted on the CG's website for any member of the public to view. The existence of the website was publicized with a media briefing by three admirals, a news release, as well as an "all hands" email message to every member of the CG.[54]

So what are the exceptions to information that can be released? The CG has established a policy to assist its personnel in determining if something can be released or not. This policy is called "S.A.P.P", which stands for Security, Accuracy, Policy and Propriety.[55] For Security, if information is classified or for official use only, is of a law enforcement or other operationally sensitive nature it cannot be released. For Accuracy, before any information is released, the facts must be verified. CG personnel are not supposed to speculate or guess. If the answer is not known, it is okay to say "I don't know", but every attempt should be made to track down the information. For Policy, if there is a prohibition in CG or Department of Homeland Security policy about releasing certain information, such as a member's home address, it may not be released. In addition, a member can state CG policy, but only the policymaker may comment on it. Finally, for Propriety, information/visuals that violate propriety, for instance providing names of victims before next of kin are notified will not be released.[56] It also means that a member should ask "am I the right person to speak to this"? It is made clear to CG

[52] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 2-1.

[53] Amanda Ripley, (Reporter, Time Magazine) telephonic interview with the author, August 31, 2006.

[54] U.S. Coast Guard, *Final Action on the Administrative Investigation into the Diving Mishap and the Resulting Deaths of USCGC HEALY's Crewmembers that Occurred on 17 August 2006* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard, January 10, 2006) http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/foia/Healy/HEALY_FAM.pdf [accessed January 12,2007].

[55] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 2-20.

[56] Ibid., 2-20.

personnel that if they are not responsible for something, they should not speak about it and if they are unsure, they should bring it up to their supervisors before the interview for guidance.

### 5. Media Relations vs. Public Service Outreach

The CG's media policy stands apart from other public agencies for two reasons. First, it is much more proactive and aggressive, requiring its personnel to interact with the media to tell its story. Second and more important, interacting with the media is seen as an "all-hands" duty, not just restricted to pre-designated spokespeople like many agencies. Why is the CG able to entrust such an important function to its rank and file members? Is the CG putting its reputation at risk by having its personnel who do not work with the media full time and therefore do not have the expertise and confidence that comes with frequent interaction? It is not, because while it is true most CG personnel do not interact daily with the media, they do interact on a daily basis with the public. Many of these interactions occur during urgent, high stress situations, where time is of the essence and tact and sensitivity are critical. CG personnel have a tremendous amount of practice speaking with emotional family members, industry leaders who stand to lose thousands of dollars due to an incident and drug smugglers about to be arrested. CG Search and Rescue controllers in a watch center may be speaking to the family members of an overdue boater one minute, making what is known as a "Security" broadcast—asking other mariners to keep an eye out for that boater a few minutes later, or answering a reporter's cold call (calling to see if anything is going on that is newsworthy which is common practice). All of these speaking/information passing scenarios prepare the average CG personnel to speak competently with the media. Many times a media interview is seen as just another stakeholder outreach event, albeit one with a much larger audience.

### 6. Public Outreach Methods

The CG uses several methods to communicate with its stakeholders (e.g., the general public, industry, port community and family members of missing boaters). These include Urgent Marine Information Broadcasts (UMIBs) given over the radio to alert

mariners of potential dangers to themselves or others on the water and conducting external communications (EXCOMs)–calling marinas, restaurants and other locations to try to locate boaters who are reported as overdue. For Sectors operating in commercial port communities, Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIBs) are disseminated to communicate important information.[57] These MSIBs give important guidelines on what to do to prepare for bad weather, or let port users know when the port will reopen after an accident; essentially any information that is important for the users of the port to know in order to keep operating safely, yet does not qualify as "news" to the media. MSIBs are typically disseminated via fax or email, on unit websites or the CG's password protected (but accessible to "need to know" port and industry officials) Homeport website. They are drafted and released at the port level, allowing for quick distribution of the information as necessary. In addition to these written methods of communications, the CG will also conduct meetings with stakeholders as necessary to pass along information and build consensus on controversial issues. For example, in 1999, the Causeway Bridge in Galveston, Texas needed some emergency repairs which required the restricting of barge traffic through the area for several weeks. This would cause delays and therefore money, for the towboat operators. A meeting was held, facilitated by the author, to lay out the options for the operators. While the CG had the authority to take whatever action it deemed necessary to ensure the safety of the repair crews (including closing the waterway), by getting the input of the operators, it was able to minimize the economic impact to the companies and get the repairs done quickly. Had we not taken that step, it is conceivable that one or more of the operators could have sought a court injunction to stop the CG's actions, which would have resulted in an unsafe condition for the bridge repair crews and would have extended the time that the repairs would have taken. Instead, the operator's trade association endorsed the plan, convinced dissenters to go along and the repairs were completed safely and quickly. The CG also provides liaisons to appropriate state and local Emergency Operations Centers. This is to ensure open communications links and common operational picture awareness between the local and state governments and the CG are in place. CG Sector offices provide liaisons any time

[57] Author's experience: I sent many MSIBs during the run-up for tropical storms and hurricanes between 1997 and 2001. I confirmed this practice is still being used in Gulf Coast Sector Offices.

a direct connection is required during an incident. As a result, although the CG is a federal agency, it is accepted as a part of the local community and is a trusted agent. CG units are very familiar with these procedures and their use is ingrained in the culture.

### 7. Internal Communications

In addition to keeping external stakeholders informed, the CG uses several methods to ensure its personnel are kept up to date during emergencies. Many units use phone trees, whereby an individual is responsible for calling one or two others on the tree, then they call two others and so on until everyone is notified. Some units have a prerecorded message that its personnel are supposed to call in to get updates. Units have web pages its personnel can access to get the latest news. Some other units have a "fail-safe", whereby if a person cannot reach the office by phone, it is assumed they should report to their assigned duty location to await orders. These methods are critical to keep personnel informed, especially in the days prior to a storm when they are engaged in securing their homes and getting their families on the road to their evacuation sites. In order for personnel to be ready to respond, they must take care of their personal needs ahead of time first so that they can fully focus on the mission at hand. These communication methods ensure they can be away from the unit, yet still stay in contact for critical information exchange.[58] Finally, the CG, like all other agencies, has operational reporting requirements to ensure that all levels in the chain of command know what is going on. These reports may be sent via message, email, telephonically, or in a pinch, using runners.

### 8. CG Crisis Communication Policy, or Releasing Information during a Critical Incident

For better or worse, the CG is in the crisis business. Its personnel conduct operations in urgent or emergent situations, such as SAR, vessel explosions, oil spills, migrant interdiction operations and law enforcement. These types of incidents are very newsworthy and can have very dramatic visuals. If the CG does not provide the proper

[58] Author's experience. Discussions with Coast Guard personnel currently in the Gulf Coast confirmed these communications practices are still in use today.

context for those visuals, the media story presented can be very untruthful. The CG, in its Public Affairs Manual, recognizes these pitfalls and provides the following objectives in releasing information during such events:

- Release information concerning the crisis to satisfy the public's need to know. Coast Guard operations are a matter of record, and only certain information can be withheld. As government employees, we work for the public. As members of the military, we have a duty to the public. We want to avoid any appearance that the Coast Guard is not answerable to the American taxpayer.
- Demonstrate to the public that the Coast Guard and other agencies are responding to the crisis. The public expects the government to handle certain crises. As an agency of the government, the Coast Guard must demonstrate its ability to serve the needs and protect the interests of the country.
- Direct the public to action if necessary. For example, airborne agents from a hazardous chemical may force the evacuation of a nearby populated area. The Coast Guard would use the media to help make certain that the evacuation is complete and orderly.
- Involve the public as necessary. In some cases, it may be necessary to solicit information or assistance from the public. For example, someone at sea may have spotted a vessel that was reported overdue. Using the media to spread the word reaches more people than any other method.
- Allay the public's fears and concerns. People quickly become confused, frustrated and angry if they cannot get information affecting their lives or if they believe no one is in control of a situation. The media can easily provide our information to a broad segment of the public.
- Don't panic. Help is always available. If you believe the media's requests will exceed your resources, call your area or district public affairs office for assistance.[59]

### 9. Joint Information Center (JIC)

A JIC is often established during the onset of a major pollution incident or other major crisis (e.g., airline disaster, flood) when more than one agency is responding in order for the Unified Command to speak with one voice. For instance, when company X had an oil spill in Galveston, Texas, a JIC was formed with the PAOs from the CG, Texas General Land Office and Company X to coordinate the public affairs efforts during the

[59] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 2-24.

crisis.[60] The PAOs drafted a joint news release that was approved by the three members of the Unified Command. More on JICs can be found in Section F of this Chapter.

### 10. Public Affairs Guidance

As previously mentioned, the CG trains its personnel on what to do and empowers them to take action without having to go back to higher authority for approval. This includes the public affairs arena. Occasionally, circumstances require the official public affairs position of the CG be established at CG Headquarters. Instead of referring all media inquiries from the field up to Headquarters, which might cause unacceptable delays, Headquarters may instead issue Public Affairs Guidance to the dedicated Public Affairs staffs at Area, District and PADETs, who may disseminate them further depending on the situation. For instance, if the CG is involved in an incident with national significance, many CG units around the country will receive media inquiries on the subject. Guidance will be disseminated out to the field to let local units know what, if anything may be discussed with the media. If nothing may be discussed locally, then the guidance will give explicit instructions to pass the media inquiries to a specific CG Public Affairs office. This guidance provides a summary of the issue, guidance on the CG's posture on the issue (either active or passive), what other guidelines to follow and includes key messages to relay in all media interactions. Guidance from Headquarters is meant to be short and sweet and is usually about a page long. Headquarters also disseminates another type of media engagement guidance when necessary that is disseminated more broadly throughout the CG to anyone who may be called upon to discuss an issue before governmental, industry or public audiences. This type of guidance provides the communications objectives and gives a list of talking points and other information to assist unit commanders in providing the key messages to stakeholders with whom the CG interacts. The purpose of the guidance from Headquarters on newsworthy subjects is to ensure everyone in the CG who is speaking on a given subject is giving a consistent message CG-wide.[61]

---

[60] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 2-32.

[61] Commander Jeff Carter (Chief, Coast Guard Media Relations) telephonic interview with the author, July 6, 2006.

### 11. "Semper Gumby"

If all else fails, CG personnel are expected to use on scene initiative to solve problems and get the job done. This bias for action is expected in everything CG personnel do. In the Public Affairs Manual, PAOs are told to "Use your imagination" to find new ways of getting their message out to the media.[62]

## C. STATE OF THE MEDIA OVERVIEW

### 1. Introduction

It is important to realize that the news media is not a monolithic entity. Each medium (television, radio, newspapers, magazines and blogs) has its own strengths, limitations, news cycle and influence. For instance, television news stories have only a short period of time to tell a story (about one and a half minutes long), but reaches millions of viewers. In contrast, a newspaper story can convey much more information, but typically reaches much fewer people.[63] The companies that own television and radio stations, newspapers and magazines are for profit enterprises and the bottom line for them is to make money. This chapter will concentrate on the medium of television, although statements concerning openness and availability towards reporters certainly apply to all media. Television news programs strive to have the most interesting, most compelling and most dramatic stories in order to boost their ratings and therefore their advertising rates.

### 2. Need to "Feed the Beast"

Since the advent of the 24 hours a day news television stations, there is an insatiable need to fill all of those minutes of airtime. If the reporters do not get the information from you, they will look elsewhere, because dead air is not an option. As a result, the old system of a news cycle, whereby stories were gathered until a specified period of time to air on a specific news program (typically 7 am, 12 noon, 6 and 11 pm), after which all new news would have to wait until the next telecast is now obsolete and

[62] *Coast Guard Public Affairs Manual*, 8-6.

[63] Scott Sayres, (Reporter, FOX 4 (KDFW) Dallas, Texas), telephonic interview with the author, December 4, 2006.

has been for a number of years, although some public officials still believe it is valid.[64] Because such an enormous need for news content exists, producers/reporters do not have a lot of time to research and cover each individual story. Unless a reporter has a specific beat and is therefore better educated to the nuances of the stories, there is a good chance that the reporters will not have the background to understand all of the intricacies of the story being covered. For example, if a chemical spill requires one neighborhood to evacuate and one to shelter in place, it probably will not be clear to the reporter why both neighborhoods were not evacuated and perhaps the focus of the story becomes how officials were not consistent with the public's safety, instead of a story about how officials are careful enough to take the proper actions depending on distance from the spill. The only way reporters would understand the different approaches is if they were educated on the topic.

### 3. Why They are Called News "Stories"[65]

As mentioned above, news items need to be compelling and dramatic. Since reporters only have about 90 seconds to tell the complete story, elements of the story need to be as simple as possible to ensure the basics of the story can be told in that short period. Stories with a lot of nuances and gray areas do not translate as well into the 90 second format. Instead, stories tend to follow a basic formula that has been used for centuries: Good Guy, Bad Guy and Damsel in Distress, or victim.[66] Sometimes the Good Guy wins, sometimes the Bad Guy, but in any event the story is compelling. By framing the story in this way, the main characters actions can be seen in black and white, making the story easy to comprehend in a short period. Here are a couple of examples to elucidate this concept.

- Robbery: This one is easy. In the case of a robbery, the bad guy is the robber, the good guys are the police and the damsel is the robbery victim.
- Hurricane: Bad guy is the storm, good guys are the rescuers, and damsel is the person clinging to a tree, waiting to be rescued.

---

[64] Gerald R. Brown, *Now is Too Late2: Survival in an Era of Instant News*, (Bellingham: Edensveil, 2006), 52.

[65] Sandman interview, November 21, 2006.

[66] Brown, *Now is Too Late*, 61.

These were some fairly straightforward examples. However, here is another one that is not as straightforward:

- Budget cuts: Bad guy is the local government, good guy is the advocacy group which is fighting to have funding for the arts restored and the damsel is either the community who enjoys the arts, or the artists who need the grants in order to survive.

But it is not that simple. The local government needed to make the cut to the arts program because the public safety unions negotiated a pay raise, while at the same time tax revenues decreased because of the closure of an auto plant. The local government was forced to make a choice between laying off police officers or cutting the arts funding. Is it fair to call the local government the bad guy?

### 4. Accuracy vs. Truth

The story disseminated to the public was too simplistic and although it was accurate (the local government *was* cutting arts funding), it was not truthful. Depending on the theme of the story, the facts of the story may be portrayed in inaccurate ways. In order to assist the reporter in getting the story as truthful as possible, it is important to explain why the story does not fit the good guy/bad guy/damsel model. For instance, in a case where firefighters make a decision not to save a house which results in the death of the homeowner and the widow sues the city can be framed as: bad guy: firefighters, good guy: plaintiff's lawyer, damsel: homeowner. However, what if the homeowner did not obey the mandatory evacuation notice, despite the ability and means to do so and was told there would be no firefighting in their neighborhood due to the rough terrain? What if the firefighters were busy fighting fires in a different neighborhood? What if the firefighters had tried to reach the homeowner despite the extreme danger to them? It is important to be able to explain the "meta" story behind the story in order for the public to have a better understanding of what occurred.[67]

[67] Sandman interview, November 21, 2006.

### 5. A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

A story needs to be visually compelling. Producers and reporters try to find visuals that help to tell the story, because people can relate better to the subject matter and get an emotional bond if they can see for themselves what is going on.[68] However, just because a visual is shown, unless the spoken words put the visuals in the proper context, the story may again be accurate, but not truthful.[69] For example, several years ago a news helicopter filmed CG personnel in a small boat spraying pepper spray into the faces of swimming Cuban refugees. This was a very compelling visual and it appeared the CG personnel were using excessive force against unarmed swimmers. What was not explained to the viewers was the fact that one of the swimmers was trying to swim into the spinning propeller on the CG boat in order to injure himself. In this circumstance, the use of the pepper spray to compel the swimmer to not cause worse harm to him or others was permissible under the established operating procedures.[70] This was a very complicated case that had it been explained fully might have reduced the resulting outrage expressed by Cuban immigrants in the South Florida community. In order to reduce the possibility of a visual being taken out of context, it is imperative that public officials be able to immediately explain the visuals. Since visuals are so important, it is vital that agencies assist the media in obtaining good visuals that will tell that agency's story in a truthful way.

### 6. Mutual Trust=Fair Coverage

The news media have a job to do. They have many hours of airtime to fill with compelling stories that people want to watch. The more people watch, the more money the station can charge for advertisers to buy slots for commercials. Interviews with reporters revealed that although it would be nice to be able to fill that time with in-depth, thoughtful stories, the bottom line requires quick, emotion-grabbing stories.[71] Due to the

---

[68] Sayres interview.

[69] Admiral Thad Allen (Principal Federal Official for Hurricane Katrina, and current Coast Guard Commandant), interview with the author in New Orleans, Louisiana, October 17, 2006.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Sayres interview.

sheer volume of stories that must be shot, edited and put on the air, untruthful statements are bound to occur. Sometimes these untruths are due to the unethical treatment a reporter may put on a story to mislead the audience.[72] Other times, despite putting together a story in good faith, the reporter misunderstands the complexities, or oversimplifies the facts and therefore the resulting story is wrong. While in both cases the result is an untruthful story, there is a tendency for public officials to assume all reporters are purposefully creating disingenuous stories. This is unfortunate, because many officials just choose to not speak with any media, to avoid being misquoted. While it might make sense to ignore requests for interviews from unscrupulous reporters, if the reason a story was wrong was due to a misunderstanding by the reporter, the better thing to do would be to educate that reporter so that the story will be correct the next time. The more exposure a reporter gets to an agency, the more trust that reporter will have towards that agency. Conversely, the more experience an agency has with a specific reporter, the more that agency will trust that reporter.[73]

### 7. Get to Know Reporters before a Crisis

What are ways to increase the reporter's exposure to any agency? Developing relationship before an event is crucial.[74]. While many public officials dislike speaking with the media immensely, if a reporter wants to do a story involving that agency, the coverage will more likely be better if they get that agency's side of the story. Remember, the news media abhor a vacuum. If the agency will not speak on record, the reporter will always find someone who will—disgruntled ex-employees, union officials, and angry citizens. Since controversy has a bigger emotional hook, if the reporter can show people who are mad at the agency, that story will definitely be covered. A quiet story about how an agency official donated 30 pints of blood may make the news towards the end of the program; a story about how the agency would not let the employee miss an hour of work and had to wait until after 5 pm to donate that 30th pint which was going to be used during an operation on conjoined twins may make the first 5 minutes. If an agency takes

[72] Sayres interview.

[73] Ripley interview.

[74] Ibid.

the time to educate and work with their local media to build the trust, both sides will be better off—the reporters will craft more effective stories and the agency will have more truthful (with a better shot at being more positive) stories.

### 8. The More Sensational the Story, the Longer It is Still News

A major news story will captivate an audience for a long time.[75] For example, when the planes struck the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and Pennsylvania, there was wall-to-wall coverage on the major news networks for several days, initially without even commercial breaks. No other news stories mattered, the story had a very strong emotional draw and audiences could not get enough information. In those initial days, the coverage on each station was essentially the same: images of the planes striking the WTC, people running from the debris cloud, firefighters and others digging through the rubble pile. As the days went on, the news stations began covering other aspects of the incident to stand out from each other. Some stations ran tickers showing victim names and emergency phone numbers to call for information. They also started to carry some "side bar" stories to provide more in-depth coverage of the events. These other stories included competing experts on each of the stations discussing Al Qaeda, building safety, even on how search dogs find their victims. As the weeks went by and the shock was beginning to wear off, some stations upped the emotional ante by discussing other ways Al Qaeda could kill large numbers of Americans including stories on anthrax, dirty bombs and chemical weapons. Eventually, the amount of coverage on this disaster dropped off and other stories began to run again. While most news stories do not have this impact, there are situations where an incident will dominate news for a day or so. These stories still draw significant interest and the public will be interested in other related stories to paint a more complete picture.

### 9. Example from 1992

In late January 1992, the author participated in a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation of a sunken recreational vessel which resulted in seven

[75] Nancie Poppema (Crisis Communications consultant), interview with the author, November 21, 2006.

deaths (and one survivor). This happened in a very small media market in western Kentucky and dominated the news for three days. The stakeholders (e.g., the investigators, the relatives, the townspeople and the reporters from the news stations) were all standing on the bank of the Ohio River watching/waiting for the divers to locate the vessel and/or the victims. After interviewing the sole survivor, the victims' family members and townspeople, the reporters were scrambling to find other interesting stories. They did a story on the cadaver dogs brought in to sit in the bow of a small boat to sniff the water. They interviewed a woman who was angry that the federal government did not have a fleet of boats looking for the victims. They wanted to interview the NTSB member, but he did not think it was appropriate to be part of the story. In retrospect I think he missed a golden opportunity to explain the mission of the NTSB—to study accidents in order to prevent similar accidents in the future and therefore save lives. Since the reporters were looking to fill airtime, it would have been easy for the NTSB to provide an "evergreen story"; a story that is not time sensitive and that can be written and put on the shelf for immediate retrieval when the opportunity presents itself.[76]

Remember, in times of full, 24/7 coverage of an event, the media are scrambling to fill all of that airtime. An agency can make the job of the media easier (and therefore, ensure they get to tell their story instead of someone else) if they pitch stories, provide people to interview and provide compelling visuals. This will go a long way to improve an agency's relationship with the media.

### 10. The Honeymoon Period Does Not Last That Long

When a big story happens, such as 9/11, or a large natural disaster, there is a period of time where the media tends to ask "who, what, where, when" questions, but will hold off on the "how and why."[77] In other words, the coverage will concentrate on what is happening and efforts to resolve it, instead of why an agency made a certain decision or took the action it did. The criticism and Monday morning quarterbacking of agency actions/inactions may eventually come, but a honeymoon period typically occurs

[76] Poppema interview.

[77] Hank Wallace (Seminar Speaker, "Write and Speak Like the News"), telephonic interview with the author, September 15, 2006.

when the agency is perceived as the good guy in the story. This time period is said to be about forty eight hours, but many factors may make this period longer or shorter than that.[78] For instance, if an agency has a positive reputation, it might take longer for the honeymoon to end. On the other extreme, if the situation is so bad and the agency is seen as being totally ineffective (think FEMA in the first days after Hurricane Katrina), the media will begin to focus on the agency in a much shorter period of time.

It behooves an agency to be accessible to the media during this honeymoon period to make it clear to them what steps that agency is taking to resolve the situation. If an agency does not have the answer, it is permissible to say "I don't know", as long as the agency gets back to the media once it does know.[79] This way, the media will get the sense that the agency is willing to get the media what it needs, will build trust between the reporter and the agency and will wait for the information (but not forever). If the media believe the agency is taking correct actions, the coverage of that agency will continue to be positive, or at the very least, neutral.

Finally, an agency needs to realize that the media's hindsight is 20/20. There may be second guessing of actions an agency took based on the best information at the time. While it is unpleasant to have to explain why actions were taken that ultimately turned out not to be the best, it is better to engage the media to put the situation to rest, instead of being inaccessible. The story will go away much quicker if an agency engages the media, instead of giving the media a new story with the assistance of others who will speak to them.

## D. THE EVOLUTION OF THE JIC MODEL

### 1. Introduction

Before discussing the development of the JIC model, it is necessary to provide a little background on oil and hazardous materials spill response regulation in this country.

[78] Sayres interview.

[79] Sandman interview, November 21, 2006.

### 2. Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Legislative History

The National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan, more commonly called the National Contingency Plan or NCP, is the plan for how the federal government responds to oil and hazardous materials (hazmat) spills. The first plan was written in 1968 in response to the massive oil spill from the oil tanker TORREY CANYON off the coast of England. This plan addressed how various federal government agencies would respond to oil spills. Over the years, the plan has evolved in response to other significant spill events and increased national sensitivity to environmental protection. In 1972, Congress enacted the Clean Water Act of 1972, which revised the NCP to include plans for responding to hazardous materials as well as oil. In the aftermath of the EXXON VALDEZ oil spill, Congress passed sweeping legislation to improve the nation's ability to respond to oil spills. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990 has requirements for vessel or facility owners/operators and CG and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) officials, to prepare and respond to oil discharges and even has provisions for the participation by other federal, state and local agencies to participate in contingency planning activities in a given Area.[80]

### 3. The Federal On-Scene Coordinator

The key federal official in executing response actions under the NCP is the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC). Depending on the location of the oil or hazmat incident, the FOSC will either be from the EPA (inland) or CG (coastal) and they are pre-designated in writing. The FOSC may also be from the DOD or Department of Energy, but only involving incidents on their facilities with their oil/hazmat.

#### *a. National Response Team*

One of the elements that can provide assistance to FOSCs in responding to a major oil or hazardous materials spill is the National Response Team (NRT). The NRT is made up of sixteen federal agencies, which while they do not directly respond to

[80] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *National Contingency Plan Overview* (Washington, DC: Environmental Protection Agency, 2004), http://www.epa.gov/oilspill/ncpover.htm [accessed October, 26 2005].

incidents, are responsible under the NCP for distributing information useful for planning for and responding to emergencies, planning for responding to emergencies and training to respond to emergencies.[81] During an actual event, the NRT can assist the FOSC obtain assistance and resources from the member agencies.

### *b. Pre-1990 Oil Spill Response*

Prior to the EXXON VALDEZ spill and the major changes in the regulations requiring closer cooperation between the spiller and the CG, oil spill response was more difficult. CG FOSCs would get together with the other parties involved in an oil spill (e.g., a state environmental official and the spiller, known as the Responsible Party, or "RP") to determine what actions would be taken to clean up the spill. Although the FOSC and the other parties attempted to work together in the same location, this did not always happen. In 1988 the author responded to a major spill in Benicia, California and although the CG, State representative and RP were located in the same building, the CG had one office, the state another and the RP was down a separate hallway. Although all parties came together for meetings, for most of the time they were on their own. As a result, it took longer for cleanup decisions to get made and be executed, leading to less than ideal results.

### *c. Post-1990 Oil Spill Response*

After the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 was enacted, the FOSCs were given new authorities to direct the response and compel RPs to take proper actions. In addition, there were new requirements for vessel and facility owners/operators involving the transportation/transfer of petroleum products that ensured oil spill responses would begin quickly and be conducted in an optimum fashion, therefore minimizing the impact to the environment and economy. Since the mid 1990s, the CG has adopted the use of the Incident Command System to respond to oil spills, with the state representative and RP filling Incident Commander roles, along with the CG to form a Unified Command. The

[81] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Emergency Response Program, *National Response Team* (Washington, DC: n.p., n.d.), http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/er/nrs/nrsnrt.htm [accessed December 18, 2006].

CG has since adopted the use of ICS for managing all major incidents, forming Unified Commands as appropriate with other agencies/entities with jurisdiction over the incident.

### *d. Why Working Together is So Important*

In 1989, the EXXON VALDEZ ran aground on Bligh Reef, causing the largest oil spill in US history. The discharge of eleven million gallons required thousands of personnel and over two years to cleanup. The story had significant international attention for several months. At the time of the spill, there had been no prior planning on how to respond public affairs-wise to such a large event. In addition to significant logistical issues (no computer connectivity, hundreds of media personnel with no place to stay, insufficient telephone capacity), there was an inability, either intentional or logistical for the various stakeholders—CG, State of Alaska, Exxon to work together to issue joint news statements.[82] The results of not working together were significant:

- Since the public saw the spill in terms of good (Alaska) vs. evil (Exxon), any time the CG agreed with Exxon on an issue it was seen as being "in bed" with the company.[83] This made it difficult for the CG to be seen as objective.
- Exxon concentrated on tasks completed in their news releases; State of Alaska on impact. Therefore, regardless of how many gallons were picked up (this data provided to the media), since the state could show images of still oiled beaches, the media had the perception that no progress was being made.[84] The story became the conflict between Exxon, the state and the CG, instead of the progress of the cleanup and attempts to re-employ Alaskan fishermen as cleanup resources.
- Because there was no unified attempt made to release news and anticipate the needs of the media in a unified way (such that the public affairs effort became proactive, instead of reactive), the story the media told gave the perception that the spill was much worse than it was. Vice Admiral Clyde Robbins, the acting FOSC for the response said in an interview:

> In many ways the media distorted what was going on up there. I think that they tended to zero in on the worst beaches. In prince William Sound we

[82] U.S. Coast Guard, *Federal On-Scene Coordinator's Report: T/V EXXON VALDEZ Oil Spill* (n.p., July 1993), 469.

[83] Ibid., 466.

[84] Ibid., 464.

> had only 10 percent of the beaches with oil on them…It got blown out [of proportion] to where people began to think that instead of 10 percent we had 90 percent…[people] had a completely mistaken impression from what they read in the press, because that is indeed what they saw and that's what makes news.[85]

A year later the Oil Pollution Act of 1990 was passed that regulated the carriage of oil in this country, requiring companies to have equipment and personnel ready to respond in hours to a major discharge of oil and required greater oversight by and cooperation with the CG and Environmental Protection Agency. While post 1990 responses have gone smoother, the public relations damage in Alaska has not fully recovered. As recently as five years ago, people still thought that Prince William Sound and its beaches were covered in oil.[86] Bad perceptions can change the fortunes of governments, businesses and individuals.

After 1989, it became clear that a better way to interact with the media during major incidents was needed. Although the CG, in its role as FOSC was used to working with the other parties involved in an oil spill, it truly was not a joint effort, just three parties working in the same location trying to find a common goal.

#### *e. A Unified Message Was Needed*

The NRT, decided there needed to be a better, more comprehensive way to engage the media during an oil spill. They realized that a spill did not have to be massive to cause controversy. They saw the problems caused up in Valdez when the media heard three disparate messages coming from the state, Exxon and CG. In addition, the media posture by all three was essentially passive instead of active. The NRT determined that a new model for interacting with the media was needed, one that brought all of the parties together to tackle the media and community relations jointly. In order for this collaborative effort to work, all public affairs personnel from the various agencies and RP would need a common workspace, preferably near the incident command post. They

[85] VADM C. Robbins, (Federal On-Scene Coordinator), quoted in Federal On-Scene Coordinator's Report: T/V EXXON VALDEZ, 463.

[86] Author's experience: when responding to a much smaller spill in Valdez in 2001, I was interviewed live by a Midwestern Fox affiliate via telephone. I was asked if the area had "really ever recovered from the EXXON VALDEZ".

enlisted the help of the PIAT, which had significant experience responding to oil spills to assist with speaking with the media and arranging public meetings to draft, along with the EPA, the JIC model. The JIC model has been used by the CG since the early 1990s anytime a Unified Command is used, which is anytime more than one agency is responding to an incident. While the JIC model was originally meant to be used during oil and hazmat spill responses, its use has been expanded to any large incident for any reason where multiple response entities are responding and the incident is being managed by a Unified Command.

### *f. Jic Model—A Way to Manage Public Affairs Resources*

The JIC is designed to solve the problem faced by an Information Officer (under the National Response Plan, this position is called the Public Information Officer—they are one and the same) of too much to do and not enough hours in the day. For a small incident, an Information Officer needs to speak with the media, the public and governmental officials, e.g., mayor, governor, senator, as well as draft written products. Once the event grows too large for one Information Officer to manage, or if the event involves multiple agencies, it becomes very difficult to provide the media what it needs to accurately tell the story. The JIC model solves this by creating positions that perform specific functions, improving the span of control for the Information Officer. When using the JIC model, only the positions that are needed are filled within the organization. The NRT JIC model is designed to accommodate responses carried out under the NCP and National Response Plan (NRP).[87] As mentioned above, the CG and any agencies/entities working with the CG in responding to an incident in a Unified Command structure has used the JIC model for many years. While it is appropriate for other agencies to use the JIC model, to date the author has not seen other agencies using it other than for oil and hazardous materials spill responses.

### *g. The National Response Plan*

In 2003, President Bush signed Presidential Decision Directive 5, calling for the creation of a National Incident Management System (NIMS), which included the

[87] National Response Team, *JIC Manual*, x.

creation of a National Response Plan (NRP).[88] The NRP replaced the old Federal Response Plan and incorporated several other federal response documents, including the NCP. Under the Federal Response Plan, response functions were grouped under Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). Under the NRP, the old ESFs remained and several new ones were added, including ESF#15, the External Affairs function.[89] ESF#15 establishes a robust External Affairs organization, both at the Headquarters level and in the field to ensure that all federal agencies involved in an Incident of National Significance response are able to speak with a unified voice. In addition to the ESF#15 Annex, the NRP also has a separate Public Affairs Annex.

### *h. ESF #15 and the Public Affairs Supplement*

Prior to the NRP, there was no government-wide plan for conducting coordinated external communications during an incident. The purpose of the ESF#15 Annex is to have enough sufficient federal assets sent to the Joint Field Office (JFO) during a potential or actual Incident of National Significance in order "to provide accurate, coordinated and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector and the local populace.[90] ESF#15 provides the resources and structures that are to be followed to provide external communications from the JFO. In addition to the ESF#15, there is a separate Public Affairs Supplement, which provides guidance on how to manage the collection, approval and dissemination of information to the affected audiences.[91] The Public Affairs Annex discusses using JICs at the Incident level(s), at the JFO level, at the National level and at a virtual level, in order to coordinate the message at each JIC location. The NRP, including the ESF #15 and Public Affairs Annexes was used for the first time for an actual event during Hurricane Katrina. Interviews with Public Affairs personnel from both the CG and

[88] President George W. Bush, *Management of Domestic Incidents, Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5*, February 28, 2003, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030228-9.html [Accessed December 18, 2006].

[89]Department of Homeland Security, "*Emergency Support Function #15-External Affairs Annex,*" *National Response Plan* (Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, December 2004), ESF#15-1.

[90] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Plan*, ESF#15-1.

[91] Department of Homeland Security, *National Response Plan*, PUB-3.

FEMA indicated that since the plan was so new and did not provide very much detail, the staffs were learning things and creating processes as they went along.[92] The personnel at the JIC followed DHS rules for the release of information, which required that all news releases be approved at Headquarters in Washington, DC. This caused a delay in getting the release out to the media in a timely manner.[93]

## E. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of CG culture, organization and public affairs infrastructure and policy. It discussed how the CG expects its personnel to take the initiative to do what is necessary to get the mission done and how it encourages its personnel to get the CG's story out to the public. The current state of newsgathering and dissemination to the public was also discussed, explaining how in this world of continuous news coverage there isn't a lot of time to research stories, leading to inaccurate information presented to the public. Finally, a discussion of how the JIC model and ultimately, the NRP ESF#15 and Public Affairs Annexes were developed.

This chapter provides the necessary context that should be considered when reading Chapter III, which details the activities and consequences surrounding Hurricane Katrina, which struck Florida and the Gulf Coast in late August, 2005.

[92] Interview with unnamed DHS Public Affairs Official with the author, January 5, 2007.

[93] Interview with unnamed DHS Public Affairs Official with the author, December 10, 2006.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# III. HURRICANE KATRINA

## A. HURRICANE KATRINA TIMELINE

Note: Sources for the timeline construction can be found in Appendix A.

### 1. Introduction

This section will cover the storm's track, as well as some of the activities taken by state and federal agencies. Actions taken by the Coast Guard (CG) will be found in Section B. While research was conducted for activities in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, most of this narrative will concentrate on Louisiana, since the much of the focus of this thesis concerns media coverage in Louisiana. All times are local and given in military form (e.g., 1600 for 4 pm).

### 2. Tuesday-Thursday, 23-25 August

Tropical Depression 12 formed over Southeast Bahamas on 23 August 2005. By the next day, the winds had increased to over 39 miles per hour, the minimum speed for a tropical storm. The National Weather Service (NWS) now referred to this storm as Tropical Storm Katrina. The storm was being fed by the warm waters of the Caribbean and by 1600 the next day, 25 August, the storm had winds of over 74 miles per hour. The storm was now upgraded to Hurricane Katrina. This category one storm was fairly close to land when it reached hurricane strength and made its first landfall in Southeastern Florida, near the Broward/Dade county line at approximately 1900 on 25 August. The storm caused some moderate damage and was responsible for nine deaths in Florida. Governor Bush declared a state of emergency in Broward, Martin and Palm Beach counties, making funds available to assist in the recovery from the storm. The hurricane passed across Florida and entered the Gulf of Mexico. Although the storm lost some strength as it crossed over the land, it was not expected to dissipate and in fact models indicated that the hurricane would in fact intensify as it re-emerged over the warm waters of Gulf of Mexico. In preparation for a second landfall somewhere along the Gulf coast, FEMA Region IV, based in Atlanta, activated the Regional Response Coordination

Center, to facilitate the flow of assistance to potentially affected regions, as called for in the Stafford Act and the recently adopted Nation Response Plan (NRP)[94].

### 3. Friday, 26 August

Weather models showed that the mouth of the Mississippi River was on the outer "cone of error" of a possible hurricane landfall. At this point in time, the exact location of the hurricane's landfall was unknown. As a result, the states of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, along with the coastal counties and parishes of those states began to make some preparations to plan for a possible landfall within their states. By 1030 that morning, the hurricane had strengthened to a category two storm, with wind speeds exceeding 96 miles per hour. The National Hurricane Center (NHC) was providing periodic predictions of the storm's path, which now included about an 11% probability of striking New Orleans. The storm was getting stronger by the hour and was predicted to reach category three strength, with winds over 111 miles per hour by late afternoon. At 1800 on the 26th, Governor Blanco of Louisiana declared a State of Emergency for Louisiana. By this time preparations were being made by the federal government, as well as the potentially affected states. DHS stood up the Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG), an incident specific interagency group established under the NRP. Anticipating the need for long-term recovery activities, the Army Corps of Engineers sent Planning and Response Teams to its Long Term Recovery Center in Orlando, Florida, to await post-landfall missions.

### 4. Saturday, 27 August

As the storm continued to strengthen in the Gulf, the presidents of seven parishes declared precautionary evacuations. St. Charles Parish went one step further by ordering a mandatory evacuation. During a news conference that morning, Governor Blanco urged all residents of New Orleans and all Southeast Louisiana parishes to evacuate. Later that day, the Governor joined New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin in urging New

[94] When the President declares an area within a state to be a disaster, then federal funds become available to assist that state in its response to the disaster under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, known simply as the Stafford Act. Typically there is a cost share for the state, which is why states consider the impact carefully prior to requesting Presidential disaster declarations.

Orleans and Southeastern Louisiana residents to evacuate immediately. As the evacuation commenced, New Orleans opened the Superdome as a Special Needs shelter. Additional Special Needs shelters were opened in Monroe and Alexandria, Louisiana, several hours north of New Orleans. At the same time, FEMA Regions IV and VI had their Regional Response Coordination Centers up and running. A decision was made to move the Joint Field Office from New Orleans to Baton Rouge to get out of the possible strike zone. Later that day, President Bush declared a State of Emergency in Louisiana. Meanwhile, in Mississippi, Governor Barbour declared a State of Emergency for the state. As the day went on, more parishes declared emergencies and pre-positioned their search and rescue (SAR) assets to be able to respond after the hurricane passed. In addition, the Plaquemines Parish President called for a mandatory evacuation. By 1600 that afternoon, evacuations were in full swing, with traffic reversed (contra flow) on the highways. By 1800, Mayor Nagin declared a State of Emergency and issued a voluntary evacuation order. The NHC issued a Hurricane Watch for Southeastern Louisiana, including New Orleans, at 1900. By 2200, Hurricane Katrina had continued to strengthen and the NHC had changed the advisory to a Hurricane Warning for the North Central Gulf Coast, including Southeastern Louisiana and New Orleans. Preparations at the federal level continued and FEMA's Emergency Response Team-Advanced and Emergency Response Team-National (ERT-A and ERT-N) arrived at the Louisiana state Emergency Operations Center. The states and the federal government were completing storm preparations in anticipation for landfall.

### 5. Sunday, 28 August

By 0300 Hurricane Katrina was a massive category four storm, with winds exceeding 131 miles per hour. As preparations continued in Louisiana, shelters were opened across North Central Louisiana. By 0500 the NHC issued a Hurricane Warning from Morgan City, Louisiana to the Alabama/Florida border, which included New Orleans and Lake Ponchartrain. At 0600, New Orleans closed all floodgates and suspended rail traffic both in and out of the city. The hurricane continued to draw strength from the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico and by 0700 was a devastating category five storm, with winds exceeding 155 miles per hour. At a 0900 news

conference, Mayor Nagin called for the mandatory evacuation of New Orleans, the first such order in history. He also announced the availability of the Superdome to be used not only as a Special Needs Shelter, but also as a Shelter of Last Resort for those people trapped with no means of transportation out of the city. In preparation for the storm, the New Orleans airport was closed at 1600. With no additional flights into or out of New Orleans, thousands of tourists would have to ride the storm out and any additional response personnel would have to make other arrangements to get into the area. Later that day, President Bush declared States of Emergency for Mississippi and Alabama and declared Florida a Federal Disaster Area, making them eligible for federal assistance. Alabama Governor Riley issued mandatory evacuation order for coastal areas. Anticipating the needs of state as a result of the hurricane, Governor Blanco sent a letter to President Bush requesting federal aid. Meanwhile, FEMA was busy preparing for the hurricane. It activated Emergency Support Function (ESF) #1, to assist with transportation needs and requested the activation of Department of Defense (DOD) entities to facilitate the use of DOD assets if needed. In addition, Barksdale Air Force Base was used as a Federal Mobilization Center and was busy looking at options for using DOD facilities to house displaced people. With the landfall of Hurricane Katrina less than twelve hours away, state and federal assets continued to finalize preparations. The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries was making final checks on its equipment in preparation for its anticipated SAR missions. The Louisiana National Guard began assisting the New Orleans Police Department as a force multiplier for security. At 2200, with landfall less than eight hours away, Hurricane Katrina was still a category five storm and it was bearing down on the Mississippi/Louisiana border. Before the storm reached landfall, 1.3 million residents of New Orleans and Southeastern Louisiana had evacuated out of the storm's path, including approximately 90% of the people in New Orleans.

### 6. Monday, 29 August

In the early morning hours, Hurricane Katrina began to weaken, although it was still a very dangerous storm. By 0400, Hurricane Katrina had weakened slightly to a category four storm. Still losing strength, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near Buras,

Louisiana (extreme southeast Louisiana) as a weak category four, or strong category three storm. This part of the state juts out into the Gulf of Mexico and is essentially at sea level. The hurricane would continue in a northerly path, again going over water on its way to a second landfall near the Louisiana/Mississippi border at 1000. The diameter of the hurricane was very large and by 0800 reports start coming in about damage to levees in the 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish. At 1300, there was a report of a breach of the 17th Street Canal. Water poured into New Orleans and by the end of the day, there was reportedly three to eight feet of water in the 9th Ward and St. Bernard Parish. Eventually, up to 80% of New Orleans was reported to be flooded. Military helicopters were brought in to drop large shipping containers full of sandbags into the levee breaches in an attempt to stop the flow of water into the city. This continued for several days. As soon as the winds diminished enough to be within operating parameters, agencies began SAR activities, including the Louisiana National Guard, CG, Navy and Marine Corps helicopters and small boats. While there were many rescues performed in Alabama, Mississippi, as well as Louisiana, the majority were done in Louisiana. Rescued people were brought to the Superdome, highway overpasses and any place that was dry. Meanwhile, other agencies were making preparations for recovery efforts. DHS Secretary designated Hurricane Katrina as an Incident of National Significance and named FEMA Director Michael Brown as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) under the NRP. The EPA in Region VI activated its Regional Response Center in Lafayette, Louisiana to serve as a staging area for EPA equipment and personnel. All through the day, the CG received reports of hundreds of loose barges and mobile offshore drilling units (floating oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico) that were damaged, off station, or missing. Later in the day, President Bush declared Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi Federal Disaster Areas, making federal funds available for recovery.

### 7. Tuesday, 30 August

By 0200, Hurricane Katrina's wind had weakened and was now downgraded to a Tropical Storm over Tupelo, Mississippi. However, the damage wrought by the hurricane was causing the waters to continue rising in New Orleans. The Army Corps of Engineers declared that if levee breaches were not fixed, the city would flood to the level

of Lake Ponchartrain. Heavy lift helicopters continued to drop shipping containers filled with sandbags into the breaches to stem the flow. SAR operations continued using helicopters and boats to pull people off of roofs to safety. Conditions at the Superdome and New Orleans Convention Center continued to deteriorate.

### 8. Wednesday, 31 August

Katrina, now downgraded to a Tropical Depression, was now over Cleveland, OH. The military was asked to assist in the recovery. Joint Task Force (JTF) Katrina, established at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, was stood up under the control of Lieutenant General (LTG) Honore. Despite the efforts to stop it, flooding continued into New Orleans through the levee breaches. SAR operations continued. Air Force C-17 aircraft were brought in to conduct medical evacuations of patients.

### 9. Thursday, 1 September

Due to the terrible sanitary conditions and lack of food and water supplies in the impacted region, the Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a Public Health Emergency. The flooding continued into the city, as the levee breaches were not yet sealed. To make matters worse, the police and other agencies were hearing reports of random gunfire and looting throughout the city. These reports caused SAR operations and services to people in the Superdome to be curtailed due to the risk to the rescuers. The Superdome was the main shelter location and eventually more than 83,000 people made their way to it, either prior to the storm or in its aftermath. Evacuation of these people to Houston began this day, which took several days to complete. SAR operations continued within the city.

### 10. Friday, 2 September

Relocation of evacuees from the New Orleans Convention Center to other locations began. This operation took two days. In order to improve the lot of residents who remained in New Orleans, National Guard, CG and other DOD assets delivered food (meals, ready to eat, or MREs) and water. One of the results of the storm was the fouling of the navigation channel in the Mississippi River and harbors. Navy Anti-Submarine

Warfare assets were used to locate and chart sunken vessels to help get those waterways reopened as soon as possible. SAR operations, although much reduced, were continued.

### 11. Saturday-Monday, 3-12 September

Federal and DOD assets continued to arrive to help with the recovery. Once the breaches in the levees were sealed, the Army Corps of Engineers began "unwatering" the city.[95] While this was predicted to take months, it instead only took weeks. USNS COMFORT arrived to provide medical care, since the medical infrastructure for New Orleans was almost non existent. On 5 September, CG Vice Admiral (VADM) Allen was named the New Orleans PFO. On 9 September, Michael Brown was relieved and VADM Allen was designated as the Katrina PFO. Three days later, Michael Brown resigned from FEMA. By the time all SAR operations ceased, a total of 62,000 people had been rescued via helicopter or boat and 12,000 patients and caregivers were medically evacuated.

## B. COAST GUARD ACTIVITY TIMELINE

Note: Sources for the timeline construction can be found in Appendix A.

### 1. Introduction

This narrative includes activities performed by the CG in preparation for and ultimately in response to Hurricane Katrina. CG personnel plan, train and revise tactics in anticipation of having to respond to one or more major hurricanes during a typical hurricane season. Although there were SAR operations, oil and hazardous materials (hazmat) responses, Aids to Navigation (ATON) operations, delivery of food and water and other humanitarian operations conducted in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida, since the major focus of this thesis deals with the media coverage in Louisiana, most of this timeline concentrates on Louisiana.

[95] Unwatering is the term used for pumping flood waters out of the city.

### 2. Hurricane Planning Activities Prior to 1 June 2005

All coastal CG units (including the Atlantic Area and East Coast Districts offices) which either have responsibility to respond to, or be affected by hurricanes updated their current year Hurricane Plans. The planning that goes into the written plans includes verifying contact phone numbers for stakeholders and unit personnel, updating duty schedules and personnel assignments based on transfer of personnel both into and out of the unit (1/3 of CG personnel transfer each year, most between May and August), incorporating last hurricane season's lessons learned and training personnel to ensure they understand their assignments. The last step is to hold a hurricane tabletop exercise to ensure the plans are reasonable and achievable. CG Hurricane Plans tend to be fairly comprehensive and effective. The reason for this is simple: they get a lot of practice.

### 3. 1 June

The CG Atlantic Area, whose area of responsibility includes all East Coast and Gulf Coast units, orders the setting of Hurricane Condition (HURCON) V. This is the lowest level of preparedness for hurricanes and requires CG units to take some basic preparedness actions, such as keeping vehicles at a certain fuel level. Units will remain at Condition V until 30 December, unless a projected hurricane threatens to strike, in which case the potentially affected units will be ordered to a higher level of preparedness. Each HURCON is dependent on the anticipated time to a hurricane strike, culminating with HURCON I, where a hurricane is anticipated to strike within 12 hours. In any given year, including years where there are no major hurricane impacts, CG units get practice using their Hurricane Plans, setting the various HURCONs. The reason for this is simple. Because the cone of error makes it difficult to determine exactly which area will be impacted by a hurricane, it is not uncommon for a Gulf Coast unit to set HURCON 3, whereby a storm is threatened to strike within 48 hours, several times during a hurricane season, regardless of whether the storm actually strikes that area. This way, the personnel at each unit get a lot of practice preparing for storms. As a result, personnel are familiar with the requirements at each HURCON and therefore can perform the activities smoothly. At each HURCON, preplanned activities are performed to ensure

each unit and its personnel, its family members and stakeholders are prepared so that storm impacts are minimized and post hurricane recovery activities can commence as soon as possible. While all CG units share the overall common goals of preservation, continuity of operations, response and reconstitution/recovery, each unit type will take different steps to achieve these goals. For instance, a non-response unit, for example the Finance Center, will concentrate on ensuring the safety of its personnel and family members, take steps to protect its assets (physical structures and equipment, computer databases and other sensitive materials) and ensure it is able to get back to work as soon as possible, even if its building is damaged. An Air Station will perform those activities, but will also prepare to send response assets (and actually do that if necessary) out of the strike zone so that they will be ready to respond as soon as it is safe to begin conducting missions again. A Sector will take all the above precautions and in addition, will call port stakeholders to warn them to take protective actions for their facilities, vessels and personnel and will also make patrols around the port area to ensure compliance to minimize the damage that could be caused by improperly secured vessels and other equipment found around a port. In addition, CG Auxiliary members will secure their vessels, identify where their members are and be ready to respond post storm if requested for SAR operations.

### 4. 1 June-23 August

CG units performed their routine activities of SAR, pollution response to oil and hazardous material spills, law enforcement, waterways management, among others. These activities were sometimes performed as a result of pre-Katrina hurricanes, as 2005 was a very busy hurricane year. As a result, CG personnel were in a high state of readiness to respond in preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina.

### 5. Tuesday, 23 August

The Seventh CG District (D7) in Miami, FL activated its Incident Management Team (IMT). CG Sector Miami set HURCON II, expecting landfall of a storm within 24 hours. Activities included calling port stakeholders to ensure their assets were secured.

### 6. Thursday, 25 August

Sector Miami upgraded to HURCON I and surrounding CG units were kept at lower HURCON levels from II to IV. Air Station Miami evacuated all but four aircraft out of projected impact area for use once the storm passed. Sector Miami issued a Captain of the Port Order suspending all vessel movements and cargo operations within the projected impact area until the danger passes. The port was closed to all activity. Hurricane Katrina made landfall as a category one storm near the Broward/Dade county border.

### 7. Friday, 26 August

Hurricane Katrina caused some property damage in Florida. D7 provided liaison officers to Dade, Broward and Brevard county Emergency Operations Centers in order to facilitate the use of CG assets if needed. Bridges in Dade and Broward counties were locked down until their safety could be ascertained. Because the storm caused the spill of some oil and hazmat, FEMA activated ESF #10 (Oil and Hazardous Materials Response), with CG and EPA officials responding to the spills as needed. However, after completing damage assessments, D7 reported no significant oil or hazmat spills as a result of Katrina's Florida landfall. When a storm passes over navigable channels, the wind and waves can cause buoys to move off station and sand/debris to decrease the depth of the channels, rendering them impassible. One of the major missions of the CG after a storm passes is to assess the navigability these channels, including repairing and replacing ATON assets and this was done in Florida as soon as the storm passed. After performing these surveys, eight ports within the impacted zone were revealed to be undamaged and were able to resume normal operations, four had some damage and had to operate under some restrictions and four were damaged and had to remain closed. All but five of the aircraft from Air Station Miami returned to base. Some CG facilities sustained damage, but all personnel were safe and accounted for and operations were not significantly impacted. Meanwhile, the Eighth CG District (D8) based in New Orleans set HURCON IV throughout projected impact area in preparation for the second landfall of Hurricane

Katrina. Sector Mobile activated its IMT to facilitate the Command and Control of all Sector Mobile, Aviation Training Center Mobile and Gulf Strike Team assets.

### 8. Saturday, 27 August

The risk to the Florida Keys from a second landfall passed and the Tropical Storm Warning for that area was discontinued. All South Florida ports were now reopened. The threat to the D8 Area of Responsibility continued to grow and D8 established its IMT in New Orleans. At 1830, the entrance to the lower Mississippi River was closed to vessel traffic in anticipation of closing the ports. Later that day, D8 set HURCON III for Sectors New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama. Because New Orleans was in the cone of error, D8 executed its Continuity of Operations (COOP) plan. An "away" IMT was sent to the St. Louis, MO COOP site. Ports throughout the Gulf Coast prepared for the possible landfall of Hurricane Katrina. Port condition Whiskey, which is the port version of HURCON IV used by port facilities, was set for New Orleans, Morgan City, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama. While port facilities had to take some specific actions to prepare for a possible storm, at this time all ports and the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway remained open, although they did anticipate setting port condition X-ray (analogous to HURCON III) in the near future. Many of the families of CG members were evacuated to safe locations inland away from the storm's path. This proved to be a crucial step in allowing CG members to concentrate on the missions to come.

In preparation for oil and hazmat spills, an inevitable consequence of major natural disasters, the CG National Strike Force (NSF) prepared to deploy Strike Team personnel from all three Strike Teams to support CG and EPA FOSCs for Sectors New Orleans and Mobile, as well as EPA Regions IV and VI. Both Sectors New Orleans and Mobile requested the use of the Atlantic Area Incident Management Assist Teams (IMATs) to assist a local unit commander with incident management and the use of the National Incident Management System Incident Command System (NIMS ICS). At 2100, D8 ordered the evacuation of personnel and their family members for many units in the potential impact area.

### 9. Sunday, 28 August

CG Headquarters in Washington, DC kept track of the storm's progress, as well as the CG's progress in preparing for the storm. The CG Atlantic Area was also getting ready for Hurricane Katrina's second landfall on the Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf coasts. The Area IMT was activated to keep situational awareness of CG preparations and operations. Disaster Assistance Response Teams of CG personnel trained to respond to flood SAR were placed on standby outside of the storm impact area. Anticipating the need to provide liaisons for the myriad operations centers that would be required to prosecute the response, the Area ordered District offices to identify personnel to augment IMTs, Emergency Operations Centers and Joint Field Offices. Leaning forward, CG Liaison Officers at FEMA Regions IV and VI worked on pre-scripted Mission Assignments, which would allow for rapid deployment of CG assets prior to/after ESFs were activated.

Finally, since communications are always disrupted in the wake of a natural disaster, contingency communications vehicles was pre-staged in Sector Mobile to enable Command and Control of SAR assets as soon as it was safe to fly. Realizing the great risk to New Orleans, the rest of the D8 IMT was relocated to the St. Louis COOP site and the District Commander, Rear Admiral Duncan went to Houston, Texas to ride out the storm. Sector New Orleans operations relocated to Alexandria, Louisiana.

IMAT Blue was sent to Alexandria to assist Sector New Orleans and IMAT Gold went to Sector Mobile's Area of Responsibility, in Meridian, Mississippi. In Alexandria, preparations were being finalized to have SAR and damage assessment assets ready to deploy as soon as the storm passed and it was safe to do so. CG Liaison Officers were deployed to state Emergency Operations Centers in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. At 1100, D8 units set HURCON II. At the same time, D7 units went back to HURCON IV, as the danger for them had passed. By 1800 the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway throughout the Morgan City and New Orleans, Louisiana zones was closed to vessel traffic. Some ports remained open for departure only and the Port of New Orleans was preparing to close. Vessels not approved to ride out storm in port were ordered to

leave. The Gulf Strike Team was pre-staged in Mobile and assets from the Atlantic and Pacific Strike Teams were on standby to fly into Alexandria as soon as airports reopened.

### 10. Monday, 29 August

D8 units were ordered to HURCON I. At this point, all ports in the impact zone were closed and the Mississippi River bar and Lower Mississippi River to Natchez were closed. All bridges, locks, floodgates in the vicinity of New Orleans were closed. Once the storm passed, Post storm recovery HURCON was set for New Orleans and Mobile. Mississippi FEMA requested aircraft support for overflight assessment. Overflight assessments were conducted, but typically in concert with SAR operations, as the need for SAR was so great. The CG requested and received the authority to call up Reserve personnel to assist with post hurricane operations. At the same time, D8 requested additional CG personnel from outside of D8 to assist. There were CG assets streaming into the impacted area as soon as it was safe to do so. The first SAR case took place a little after 1400 while the winds were still above Tropical Storm strength, when two women and an infant were plucked from a boat that was fetched up against a tree. Within 12 hours of the storm's passage, the number of SAR assets in the area increased from 19 aircraft to 36 and from 16 Cutters to 24. Rescues occurred throughout Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. In Alabama and Mississippi, the need for CG SAR assets was less because those states did not lose as many organic SAR assets as Louisiana did and therefore Louisiana depended on CG SAR assets more.

### 11. Post Storm

Activities included the surge into theatre of hundreds of CG personnel from around the country to assist with SAR, waterway damage assessment and reconstitution, vessel salvage, oil/hazmat assessment and cleanup and CG asset damage assessment and reconstitution. Personnel worked around the clock conducting SAR, delivering water, MREs and ice to impacted citizens in Alabama, Mississippi and Florida. Between 30 August and 17 September, significant progress was made in conducting SAR, waterways reconstitution and getting port operations up and running. Despite significant damage to CG facilities, major CG operations were not impacted. As a result of the actions of the

CG, a total of 33,545 people were rescued between 29 August and 17 September: 12,535 via aircraft, 11,600 via vessel and 9409 patients were medically evacuated. In addition, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was reopened and tug/barge traffic was able to resume on 31 August.

By 1 September, oil was again flowing to the Louisiana Offshore Oil Platform, easing the stress to the oil industry in the area. On the environmental front, eight major oil spills totaling over eight million gallons of oil spilled into the water (for perspective, the EXXON VALDEZ spilled over 11 million gallons) were cleaned under the supervision of the NSF in about eight weeks. D8 reconstituted back to New Orleans in the fall of 2005, with some repairs to CG facilities continuing. The CG is still conducting activities in support of ESF#3, debris removal and will continue to do so until June 2007.[96]

## C. CG PUBLIC AFFAIRS (CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS) TIMELINE

### 1. Introduction

In preparation for Hurricane Katrina, the CG conducted three major public affairs activities. First, the CG prepared and disseminated information to its port and industry stakeholders from Florida to western Texas, alerting them as the storm's size and tracking progressed. These advisories explained what actions these stakeholders needed to take in order to safeguard their property and personnel, as well as advise when port waterway restrictions would take effect. Second, the CG alerted the general public to take precautions to protect their boats and themselves prior to the storm's landfall. Third, the CG Public Affairs organization identified what dedicated public affairs personnel from Headquarters, Areas, Districts and Public Affairs Detachments (PADETs) and Public Information Assist Team (PIAT) in the field would deploy to assist in the Gulf once the storm passed. Each of these activities had been practiced many times before, since it was

[96] National Strike Force personnel (who work for the author) are assigned to the mission.

the normal practice in preparing for Gulf coast storms.[97] While each of these activities were critical to the success of the CG's public affairs efforts, most of this section will address the media relations activities.

### 2. Actions Taken Prior to Landfall (26-28 August 2005)

#### *a. CG Headquarters*

In preparation, the Media Relations office in Headquarters initiated several conferences calls with Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) from Areas and Districts to draft up a list of potential public affairs personnel from around the country who could augment the D8 public affairs staff (originally based out of New Orleans; those personnel moved to their COOP site prior to landfall) from Areas, Districts, PADETs and PIAT. In addition, the Headquarters office drafted public affairs guidance for all public affairs personnel, including those field personnel who might be expected to speak directly to the media to deliver a consistent message. Finally, senior CG leadership was briefed on preparatory actions being taken.[98]

#### *b. Eighth CG District (D8)*

Before landfall, all public affairs resources were pre-staged in safe locations to ride out the storm and be ready to deploy as soon as it was safe to do so. The public affairs resources were positioned in three locations: four were located with the IMT in Mobile, Alabama in Sector Mobile's area of responsibility, four were located with the IMT for Sector New Orleans, which was now located in the Sector's COOP site in Alexandria, Louisiana and two were located at D8's COOP site in St. Louis, Missouri. The D8 website contained news releases for the media and public safety guidance for owners of boats and homes in the storm's potential path. The first news release went out on August 27, two days before landfall.[99]

---

[97] Author's experience in Galveston between 1997 and 2001, confirmed with PA personnel deployed for Katrina.

[98] Patricia Miller, "RE: Hurricane Katrina Interview Questions". September 15, 2006, personal e-mail (September 15, 2006).

[99] U.S. Coast Guard Eighth District, *External Affairs Website*, http://www.uscg.mil/D8/ [accessed August 29, 2006].

During this pre-landfall period, there were news releases sent to the media informing them on where what the CG was doing to prepare for the storm, how it was moving its resources out of the storm's path to be ready to respond once it passed and steps the public could take to protect their vessels and themselves.[100]

D8 Public Affairs Officer, Lieutenant (LT) Robert Wyman, developed a rough plan of where to send his Public Affairs specialists (PA) staff and drafted operational guidelines to assist them once they were downrange, enabling them to operate without first having to get his permission. In addition to his organic PA staff consisting of eight enlisted PAs and himself, two members of the PIAT prepared to deploy once the storm passed for a total of ten PAs in theater. In addition, Atlantic Area PAs prepared to send follow-on personnel as needed. As the PAO for D8, LT Wyman was empowered to handle public affairs issues occurring within the D8 area of responsibility. LT Wyman drafted some guidelines for his PA staff prior to pre-staging them.

These guidelines were:

- Get airborne and underway with CG units early and often
- Gather as much video as you can
- Market those visuals to the media
- Try to get media embedded with you—offer opportunities to media as operations allowed
- Try to impress upon the CG commands the immediate need for accurate data and the need to share it not only up official channels, but with the media as well, keeping with S.A.P.P.
- Only discuss what you know[101]

### *c. Sector Mobile*

The Sector set up a Unified Command made up of the major CG units in the Mobile area on 26 August to prepare for the storm. This included Sector Mobile, Aviation Training Center (ATC) Mobile and the Gulf Strike Team. A request for PA resources was made and granted. A Joint Information Center (JIC) was established on 28

[100] Lieutenant Robert Wyman (Eighth Coast Guard District Public Affairs Officer), interview with the author in Portsmouth, Virginia, August 22, 2006.

[101] Wyman interview.

August to provide a coordinated public affairs operation, with the PAs provided by D8, Area and PIAT. The public affairs personnel spoke with the media during this period, passing along the same type of information as D8, only specific to the Mobile area of responsibility, which stretched from western Florida to Mississippi-Louisiana border. These news releases were coordinated with the D8 PAO.[102] Coincidentally, the Discovery Channel had a crew working on a documentary at the ATC, which had been previously coordinated with CG Public Affair's Motion Picture and Television Liaison Office (MOPIC). Because the ATC crew was comfortable and trusted the Discovery Channel crew and the production company agreed to a MOPIC-mandated condition to pool any footage with interested news media, the Discovery Channel crew was able to retain its access to the facility and personnel. For industry and the port stakeholders, Marine Safety Information Bulletins (MSIBs) were sent out by the Sector. As port and industry stakeholders began to evacuate their facilities, the method of MSIB delivery changed from email/fax to posting the information on the CG's password protected website, Homeport, which was accessible to the port stakeholders from any Internet connection.[103]

#### *d. Sector New Orleans*

Once the Sector evacuated to their COOP site, the same types of media messages, geared towards the Sector New Orleans area of responsibility (stretching from Mississippi to eastern Texas) as was done in Mobile were disseminated, coordinated with the D8 PAO. Like Mobile, MSIBs were sent to port stakeholders. At this point, all the CG personnel could do was to wait out the storm and get ready to respond once the storm's winds slowed enough to be able to venture outside safely. The same could be said of the media—with the exception of the few who stood outside to show their audiences how hard the wind and rain were, most media pre-staged their resources outside of the danger zone and awaited the "all clear" before they would descend into the impacted areas.

---

[102] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

[103] Captain James Bjostad (Commander, Coast Guard Sector Mobile, AL), telephonic interview with the author, September 12, 2006.

### 3. 29 August

In the immediate aftermath of the storm, communications between CG units were severely disrupted. Landline telephones, most cellular telephones and the CG computer network were inoperable. In addition, many CG facilities, including Air Station New Orleans, Sector New Orleans, and Sector Mobile, Gulf Strike Team, ATC Mobile and many small boat stations along the Gulf Coast were severely damaged or destroyed. Many CG personnel lost their homes. Despite these difficulties, CG personnel continued to conduct their missions, finding workarounds when normal operations were disrupted. Public affairs operations were no exception.

### 4. Post Storm

SAR crews went out as soon as the weather was in flight operating parameters. The vast majority of media resources, still deployed in safe havens, were trying to get back to the impacted areas. It took about a day for the media to get back into the impacted areas. Once that happened, the CG received many requests for information, footage and seats on helicopters and vessels. In order to increase the ability of media outlets to receive footage, pooled reporters were used when room for reporters on SAR assets was limited. Due to a variety of reasons, including logistics, impact of storm and number of available resources, the coverage of airborne SAR was slightly different between Sector Mobile and Sector New Orleans. While the PAs were able to provide information relatively easily it was hard to get seats on helicopters for reporters. The reason was simple: Helicopters were needed for SAR and if a reporter took up a seat that meant one less person could be rescued. The media understood and accepted this explanation.[104] In Mobile, reporters were offered helicopter seats but had to agree to assist with rescues, or perhaps even be left somewhere in order to make room for evacuees.[105] Apparently, not too many reporters took up ATC on this offer. As a result, with the exception of the previously embedded Discovery Channel filming crew, there

[104] Unnamed producer, major television network, telephonic interview with the author, September 1, 2006.

[105] Author's experience: While it is not unusual for non-aircrew Coast Guard personnel on helicopters to be "dropped off" should the helicopter be diverted for SAR, I found it interesting that the ATC had enough trust in the reporters to treat them the way they treat fellow Coast Guard personnel.

were not many visual images taken of the Mobile based air SAR operation, with the exception of "Hoistcam" footage shot by the CG helicopters as survivors were being hoisted into the aircraft and provided to the news channels. In New Orleans, the news media quickly got its news helicopters back into the area and shot footage of the CG rescuing people from their roofs. At the same time, the news channels had access to CG personnel, typically pilots or rescue swimmers, who would watch the footage on the television, then provide "color commentary" via phone to the news channel. These interviews were arranged by the PA personnel in Alexandria, who would call the Commanding Officer of the Air Station, who would then put his subordinates with knowledge of the operations on the phone, in keeping with the CG's policy of letting the operators speak to the media instead of just senior officers.[106] In Alexandria, Louisiana and Mobile, Alabama, both Sector Commanders approved news releases in a timely manner, allowing the PA personnel to meet the needs of the media. In Sector Mobile, the Information Officer was empowered to release images, himself, vice gaining permission from the Unified Command, saving time.[107] In Alexandria, PAs were empowered by the Sector Commander to speak directly with the media. When required due to the nature of the information being disseminated, the Sector Commander would directly address the media, but otherwise would allow either the PAs or his subordinates to speak about the missions they were conducting.[108]

In addition to coverage of air SAR, PAs were sent out in the field to accompany other CG SAR assets, as well as CG crews who passed out water and MREs to stranded civilians. These PAs were told to be self sufficient—carry their own food, water and find a place to sleep. Their job was to document the activities of the CG responders and pass those stories and images/video back to the office (either in Mobile or Alexandria) in any way they could. In Mobile, computer connectivity was a problem. The closest Internet hotspot was located at a Starbucks near the Incident Command Post. Unfortunately, there was an evening curfew and the store had to close before the updates were due to be sent

[106] Jones interview.

[107] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

[108] Captain Frank Paskewich (Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Sector New Orleans), telephonic interview with the author, September, 2, 2006.

to the D8 Public Information and Emergency Response (PIER©) site and Coast Guard Headquarters. The PAs worked out an accommodation with the manager of the Starbucks to keep his wireless router turned on all night. This way, the PAs (who were allowed to be out past curfew) would sit in their car and upload their updates, using Hotmail or Yahoo accounts created for the response because there was no access to the Coast Guard's computer system.[109] It is important to note that PAs are not specifically trained, nor equipped to do this. In keeping with the Coast Guard's unofficial motto of "Semper Gumby", the PAs were expected to find ways to accomplish their mission.

In addition to SAR, the other missions the Coast Guard was performing and PAs were covering included:

- Maritime Homeland Security reconstitution
- Aids to Navigation Restoration (lost almost 100% of buoys and other channel markers in storm were damaged or destroyed)
- Environmental Response to oil and hazmat spills
- Reconstitution of Waterways (navigation channel no longer as deep as it was supposed to be, restricting the size of vessels that could use it)
- Recovery of CG units in Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana that were damaged or destroyed and needed to get back to service
- Vessel Salvage, where thousands of various oil industry based support vessels and fishing vessels sunk or left stranded on the ground after the storm surge receded
- CG members delivering food/water in Mississippi and Louisiana
- Marine Debris removal issues[110]

### 5. September 2005-February 2006

Once the SAR operations were over, the media coverage dropped off precipitously. Although the CG was still performing many missions as listed above, most of them only affected the maritime industry and therefore did not have the emotional impact of the other stories that were dominating the news at the time. There were two exceptions to this and those stories, while not getting too much national attention, were very significant to the local community and had the potential to raise the outrage of the

[109] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

[110] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

community against the CG. These missions were the major oil spills in Louisiana and the vessel salvage operations conducted by Sector Mobile.

### *a. Oil and Hazmat Spills Response*

Under the National Contingency Plan, the CG is the FOSC for oil and hazmat spills in the Coastal Zone and the EPA is the FOSC for spills in the Inland Zone.[111] Due to the sheer volume of the oil and hazmat spills caused by Hurricane Katrina, an agreement was made between the CG and the EPA to delineate spill response operations between the two agencies. If the product was floating in the waterway, it was the CG's response. If it was stranded on land, then it was the EPA's.[112] One of the spill sites was in St. Bernard Parish, where a tank owned by the Murphy Oil refinery spilled over 800,000 gallons of oil, which floated into the flooded neighborhoods adjacent to the refinery. As the water receded, oil contaminated the houses and yards of the residents. In the neighborhoods, the CG was responsible for removing the oil that was floating in the canals running through the neighborhoods and the EPA was responsible for the oil in the yards and on the houses. The assumption was that Murphy Oil and/or insurance would cover the interiors of the homes.[113] The CG Information Officer initiated the drafting of a joint news release, but could not get Murphy Oil or the EPA to sign off on it, nor speak to the media. As a result, the CG released a statement and spoke to reporters as to what it was doing in the neighborhood, but did not discuss what EPA or Murphy Oil were doing. Consequently, the news coverage on the story showed the EPA and Murphy Oil in a negative light, saying they were not doing an adequate job responding, while the article barely mentioned the CG, other than to say it was removing the oil in the canals, which was put in a neutral tone.[114] The CG kept PAs to cover the oil spill story in Louisiana until February 2006.

---

[111] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *National Contingency Plan, 40 CFR 300.5*.

[112] Author's personal knowledge of the response to the hurricane.

[113] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

[114] Ibid.

### *b. Fishing Vessel Salvage*

When vessels were discovered sunk or stranded on the beach, every attempt was made to contact the owner to have them take action to remove their vessel. If they did not have the financial resources, then money was available to the CG to at least remove the oil (to prevent a future spill), or remove the vessel if it posed a hazard to navigation.[115] As vessel owners returned to assess the damage to their vessels, they were very concerned that they would lose the value of the fuel (which is very valuable, especially if the vessel is a total loss) and they were not happy, some accusing the CG of purposely taking their fuel. Initially, the CG did not explain to the public why it was necessary to remove the fuel (to prevent the discharge of that fuel into the water) and why there would be no compensation to the owners for the fuel (no legal means to do so). In order to diffuse the situation, the PAs in Mobile were tasked with creating a communications plan to address the fishermen's concerns. A risk communications strategy was drafted and implemented, public meetings were held and information was disseminated in several languages since many fishermen do not speak English. This plan was successful and the level of concern from the fishing community diminished considerably.[116] The last of the PAs left Mobile in mid October 2005.

## D. CG'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS POSTURE DURING THE HURRICANE

### 1. Introduction

The last subchapter discussed what activities were undertaken by key CG leaders in the field and PA personnel before, during and after Hurricane Katrina struck. This section will cover the overarching activities taken to ensure the CG's message was consistent and available to the media and public.

[115] Author's experience: The Coast Guard has removed oil from vessels in the past under ESF#10 (oil and hazardous materials), but this is the first time FEMA has provided money to the CG to remove vessels solely for being a hazard to navigation under ESF#3, debris removal.

[116] Brewer interview, July 26, 2006.

### 2. How the CG Public Affairs Program was able to Maintain a Consistent Message Throughout the Country

There were several ways that the Public Affairs organization was able to facilitate consistent messaging, regardless of the spokesperson.

First, although the response to Hurricane Katrina was unprecedented in terms of its magnitude, the CG performed the same missions as for other natural disasters. Therefore, the personnel involved in both response operations and public affairs had prior experience, albeit on a smaller scale. The personnel could anticipate the questions that would be asked and what stories/visuals the media would be seeking.

Second, there were daily conference calls between Headquarters, Areas, Districts and the Information Officers in Mobile, Alexandria and St. Louis to discuss the issues of the day and go over public affairs guidance and talking points.[117] Public affairs guidance was also issued periodically to any CG element which might have to address the media or public.[118] A sample of this public affairs guidance, a communications plan for addressing fishing vessel salvage, is included as Appendix B. As a result, all elements of the public affairs organization had a common operating picture (COP). This COP was crucial because at one point almost half of all public affairs personnel were in the Gulf and others would have to come in to relieve the first wave, perhaps cycling back in more than once.[119]

In addition, talking points were provided to field responders in their daily operations briefs, since it was recognized that anyone in the field had the potential of being interviewed by the media. An example of such guidance can be found in Appendix C.

---

[117] Lieutenant Commander Glynn Smith (U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area Public Affairs Officer, was acting Information Officer in Alexandria, Louisiana at the COOP site for Sector New Orleans), telephonic interview with the author, September 15, 2006.

[118] Author received them periodically for Hurricane Katrina, and continues to receive them on other Coast Guard issues as a normal part of the job.

[119] Miller email.

### 3. How did the PAs know What to Cover?

Both Unified Commands, in Mobile and in Alexandria, used the NIMS ICS. The crucial part of this system is the planning cycle, a deliberate process to ensure all Unified Command objectives for the response are addressed by the incident action plan produced for the next operational period. Information Officers participated in this planning cycle and integrated their activities into the overall incident objectives. Before explaining how this was done specifically for the Hurricane Katrina response, a short description of an important part of the planning cycle is provided below.

#### *a. ICS Planning Process*

Typically, the planning cycle begins eight to twelve hours before the operational period begins, although tactical changes may be made during the current operational period if conditions warrant. The first step of the planning process is to have the Unified Command draft incident objectives (or just re-evaluate the previous period's objectives to see if they are still valid) for the upcoming operational period. Sample objectives might include: rescue stranded victims on rooftops; remove standing oil in a marsh or stabilize the levee. Once the Unified Command presents its incident objectives to the Planning Section Chief and Operations Section Chief, those two will (with appropriate assistance) determine the best strategies and tactics to be used in order to achieve the Unified Command's objectives. The rest of the planning cycle consists of validating the strategies and tactics to ensure all necessary resources needed to complete the tactics will be available during the next operational period and completing the incident action plan. This description is very simplified. For a more complete discussion of the Incident Command System, the reader is directed to the FEMA.gov website to take the Introduction to the Incident Command System, IS-100 on-line course, or other introductory ICS courses.

Two incident objectives are typically given regardless of the type of incident. They are to (1) ensure the safety of responders and the public and (2) establish

proactive public affairs and outreach plan.[120] Once the Information Officer is given this objective, he or she will draft a communications plan, explaining the strategy and tactics that would be used to get information out to the media and public, as well as to incident response personnel. One of the parts of the communications plan would discuss the establishment of a JIC in or near to the Command Post to ensure all agencies in the Unified Command would have a COP and could issue joint news releases. Once this plan is drafted, it would be submitted to the Unified Command for their approval. This way, it is very clear to both the Unified Command and the Information Officer what is expected from the Information Officer and PAs during the incident response.

#### *b. Hurricane Katrina*

In both Unified Commands, the Information Officers were included in the key meetings during the planning cycle so that they would know what activities were scheduled for the day (current operations briefing was also part of the planning process), as well as future operational periods. Armed with this information, the Information Officers would determine which of the current and future activities might make compelling stories and would pitch these to the news media. As said by the Information Officer in Alexandria, "they (the PAs) were as successful as they could scheme."[121] While the infrastructure was more intact in Mobile, which allowed better contact between the JIC and the deployed PAs, in Louisiana, once the PAs deployed from Alexandria, they had zero contact with the Information Officer. They were expected to follow the guidelines provided to them before they deployed and they did.[122]

### 4. How Did the CG Improve Its Visibility?

In addition to sending out news releases and providing visuals, the CG facilitated embedding reporters whenever possible in boat crews, in vehicles and as the airborne

[120] Author's experience: As a member of many Unified Commands, these 2 objectives have always been included, unless the incident was 100% law enforcement or counter-terrorism, in which case the public affairs objective would be more restrictive for operational security reasons.

[121] Smith interview.

[122] Smith interview.

SAR diminished, in helicopters. At the temporary Air Stations New Orleans facility (their building had been damaged), a spare bunk was provided for the news media and they had access throughout the facility.

In addition, both Sector Commanders made themselves available to the media as much as possible for interviews whenever the situation called for senior officials to engage the media. For other circumstances, they allowed their junior personnel to speak with the media.[123] Lastly, information sheets were passed out to residents and other interested stakeholders, an example of which can be found in Appendix D.

### *a. Public Information and Emergency Response (PIER©)*

Since there was such an insatiable need for information from the public and the media, the CG set up a web-based site using an application called PIER©—Public Information and Emergency Response, a commercial product licensed from a company called Audience Central. This application allows CG PA personnel to upload news releases and imagery and make it available for site visitors to view. The site has public and private areas, which allowed items to be viewed just by CG public affairs personnel, or to anyone the site "owner" choose to allow, which could be anyone. In addition, the site can be tasked to send out news releases to subscribers, such as news outlets. This way, the system can either be used to "push" information out to interested parties via email/phone/fax, or other users can "pull" out the information they need when the visit the site. This PIER© site was used to disseminate information to the media and the public. All PAs in theatre uploaded information to the site, www.uscgstormwatch.com which allowed interested people to have "one stop shopping" for all CG Hurricane Katrina related information. In order to ensure that the information that was being put on the PIER© site was appropriate, all entries were first put on the private side, then viewed and moved to the public side by LT Wyman in St. Louis. The use of the PIER© system had an added benefit: officials from CG Headquarters, DHS and FEMA were told that up-to-date information could be found on PIER© and therefore

[123] Paskewich interview.

it reduced the amount of additional internal CG/DHS reports that had to be made.[124] A sample press release posted before the storm hit may be found in Appendix E.

The website, www.cgstormwatch.com, is still operated by D8. It is updated to cover the current season, but helpfully includes some "evergreen" public service information to enable the public to protect itself in case of a storm.[125]

## E. CONCLUSION

This chapter provided three parallel timelines of activities which were taken by:

- City, state and federal agencies
- CG responders, and
- CG public affairs personnel

in preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. Each of the timelines tightened the focus from the overall response, to the CG response, to the CG public affairs response. The next chapter will focus on the public affairs postures of other DHS components.

[124] Wyman interview.

[125] U.S. Coast Guard Eighth District *Hurricane Information website* www.cgstormwatch.com [accessed 17 December 2006].

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# IV. OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES MEDIA POSTURE PRIOR TO AND DURING HURRICANE KATRINA

In interviews with personnel who work or worked for FEMA or DHS prior to and during Hurricane Katrina, a common theme emerged.[126] The author was told that rank and file personnel were strongly discouraged from speaking with the media and instead were told to refer all inquiries to designated spokespeople. For other situations, they were told flat out not to speak with the media, that only designated spokespeople could do so. During Hurricane Katrina, prior to releasing any information, all news releases had to be approved/edited by public affairs personnel back in Washington, DC. This caused a significant time delay before the information reached the media. As a result, the "official" information was not used and instead the reporters sought the information elsewhere, depriving the government of the ability to get its story on the air. [127]

The Federal government's policy during this period was for centralized public affairs management. While this may have the advantage of ensuring that the only agency information reaching the media is what the agencies' leaders want, in today's environment of instant news, the time delay caused by centralized control will effectively remove the control, as the news media will seek the information elsewhere to meet their deadlines. Commander Jeff Carter, the head of Coast Guard (CG) Media Relations, attributed the CG's success during Hurricane Katrina this way: "While some agencies were managing both operations and public affairs from DC and failing at both, the CG was managing operations and public affairs locally and reaping national benefits."[128]

On September 9, 2005, then Vice Admiral Thad Allen, USCG was designated as the Principal Federal Official (PFO). Although he was not working for the CG this capacity, but instead was representing the Secretary of DHS, he brought some of the media savvy traits he learned in the CG to his PFO position. According to Admiral

[126] These interviews with DHS personnel were not for attribution.

[127] Sayres interview.

[128] Carter interview.

Allen, "Katrina was as much a communications crisis as it was a natural disaster."[129] He recognized the need to talk to the American public to let them know that someone was in charge in the Gulf. His press assistant ensured that the media had access to him when he was in the field, that any requests for interviewed were quickly vetted and approved by DHS headquarters in order to ensure the media's deadlines were met in a timely manner. As a result, the Admiral as PFO was portrayed as someone in control of the situation, bringing order to chaos.[130] Another hallmark of his public affairs acumen was being as accessible as possible to the media (with DHS approval), to ensure the government's message reached the broadest audience. One of the ways this was done was using a FEMA satellite truck to conduct multiple morning show interviews one at a time with the various national media outlets. This satellite media tour enabled the Admiral to travel to one location (the satellite truck in a parking lot) to conduct all of the requested interviews, instead of driving all over the place to conduct only a few (and chance missing morning show deadlines). [131]

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, both DHS and FEMA have revisited their policy and have modified them. FEMA recently published a Public Affairs memo that states "FEMA employees are authorized to speak to the media, when approached, within the scope of their assigned duties…the guiding principle you should follow is *If you own it or are responsible for it, you can talk about* it" (emphasis his).[132] According to Patrick Massey, of FEMA Region X in Seattle, WA, his office received media relations training in 2006 for the first time. He said the staff was told that if they "owned" it, they could talk about it, as stated in the Paulison memo.[133]

Another improvement is to the guidance on executing Emergency Support Function (ESF) #15, the External Affairs Annex to the National Response Plan. The

[129] Allen interview.

[130] Commander Ron Lebrec (Press Assistant for ADM Allen as PFO), telephonic interview with the author, August 31, 2006.

[131] Ibid.

[132] R. David Paulison memo, *Guidance on Working Media Engagement during Disasters*, (Washington, D.C.: FEMA, August 26, 2006).

[133] Patrick Massey (FEMA Region 10 Program Coordination Branch Chief), telephonic interview with the author, December 18, 2006.

original ESF#15 discussed the ESF#15 organization, but provided very little guidance on how it would operate. The new ESF#15 Standard Operating Procedures go into detail on each organizational position and allows for tactical operators (e.g., helicopter rescue crews, USAR team members) to talk about their activities.[134]

These new changes will improve FEMA's and DHS' ability to get their messages across to the media in a more timely manner, which may result in more positive coverage, as the media will go to those agencies if they are accessible, instead of other sources of information, which may not be providing accurate information on those agencies' activities.

[134] Department of Homeland Security, *Emergency Support Function #15 Standard Operating Procedures* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security, 2006), F-10.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# V. CONCLUSION: WHY THE COAST GUARD SUCCEEDED AND WHAT LESSONS CAN BE APPLIED BY OTHER AGENCIES?

It is very important for agencies to have an effective program in place to get its messages across to the public. The Coast Guard (CG) model involves more than just following good public affairs practices. An agency can create a great public affairs policy, with all of the features of the CG's policy, yet still fail to implement it effectively. This section will begin with a discussion on what the elements of a successful public affairs policy. It will then discuss the other elements that are critical for the successful execution of that policy. Finally, suggestions will be offered on how an agency can attain an effective public affairs posture as part of its culture, with the added benefit of helping the agency improve its delivery of service to its customers and increase employee satisfaction.

## A. DETERMINE WHO THE "PUBLIC" IS

Before an agency can craft its messages, it needs to know to whom they are speaking. It is critical that the messages be tailored to the audience, otherwise the wrong message may be sent, making the situation worse. Appendix F is a list of guidelines from the Joint Information Center (JIC) Manual that can be used to help public affairs personnel determine who their different audiences are. This list is a starting point. Every attempt should be made to identify influential community leaders to elicit their assistance in identifying other publics who may not be obvious. This then allows them to tailor the messages appropriately and help the public affairs personnel figure out the best way to get the messages to those audiences, including who the spokesperson should be and what medium/media should be used.

In order to determine if the audience is receiving the messages as intended, it is vital that the public affairs personnel obtain feedback from the community.[135] The feedback is sought through questionnaires, interviews, review of media stories covering the response and observation of community members.

[135] National Response Team, *Joint Information Center Manual*, F-12.

In summary, the process for ensuring the right audience is reached with the right message takes several steps. First, different audiences are identified using prior knowledge, the guidelines in Appendix F and the list of sample "publics" in Appendix G and meeting with community leaders. Next, each audience is examined for cultural sensibilities (e.g., different languages, fishing practices, disaster reactions) and these are validated through discussions with local officials and community leaders. Then, messages are tailored for and disseminated to each audience. Finally, feedback is collected on each different audience to see how well the messages are received and understood as intended. If necessary, messages are adjusted to improve comprehension and improve community relations. While this might be time consuming, it is less time intensive than reacting to bad community relations later.

## B. CHECKLIST FOR MEETING THE PUBLIC'S NEEDS FOR INFORMATION

When it comes to the actual messages, what information does the public need? As mentioned earlier, in a disaster, the public needs to know what the government is doing to protect it and what steps the public needs to take in order to protect their lives and property.

How does an agency know if its public affairs program is meeting the public's needs in times of controversy and crisis? One way is to see if conforms to recognized risk communications guidelines. One criterion is the list called "The 7 Cardinal Rules for Risk Communications", written by Vincent Covello and Frederick Allen:[136]

- ***Accept the public as a legitimate partner***. The CG disseminated MSIBs and news releases to alert the public and stakeholders on the actions they should take to protect themselves long before the storm to allow for orderly actions, not panic.
- ***Plan carefully and evaluate performance***. Prior to the storm making landfall, the D8 Public Affairs Officer, in conjunction with Headquarters, Area and the Public Information Assist Team (PIAT) planned their response organization and what the ground rules for PA personnel would be. The orders were flexible enough to allow PA personnel to modify them as needed to overcome logistical obstacles. Performance was

[136] Vincent Covello and Frederick Allen, *Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication*, 1988, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/epa/risk_comm_principles.pdf [accessed December 28, 2006].

evaluated in a couple of ways. First, PA personnel scanned news coverage (TV and print) daily to see what types of stories were being covered and how. In addition, in house After Action sessions at the various levels in the PA infrastructure (e.g., HQ, Area, D8 and PIAT) were held to see what improvements could be made in the future to make things run smoother. The lessons that applied to other levels in the infrastructure were shared with them to be incorporated into their disaster communication plans. For example, a better way to archive digital images was listed as a requirement for future large disaster responses where thousands of images are being taken.

- ***Listen to the audience***. When it was clear that fishermen had bad perceptions of the CG's actions with regard to removing fuel from their sunken vessels, the CG brought in native speakers to explain why the actions were being taken, which alleviated their concerns.
- ***Be honest, frank and open.*** The results of the HEALY divers' deaths was released to the general public immediately after the families of the divers received them, listing the chain of events which lead to the deaths. Despite the negative light it shined on CG diving operations, the service was praised by the news media for its candor.[137]
- ***Coordinate and collaborate w/ other credible sources***. The CG routinely uses the JIC model and uses technical specialists to clarify complex issues, both for the responders and the public.
- ***Meet the needs of the media***. Every effort was made to help the media meet their deadlines, including embedding media with CG units, providing Hoistcam video, providing "color commentary" to narrate live rescue video and continually updating a web based news release website accessible to the media dedicated to the response.
- ***Speak clearly and w/ compassion***. Many CG personnel on camera were from New Orleans and were therefore victims themselves. They were able to empathize with the people they were rescuing and therefore were not seen as faceless bureaucrats, but as fellow human beings trying to make a bad situation better.

To this list, I would add the following:

- ***Ensure the agency has a Common Operational Picture***. Every level of the organization involved in the incident response should be working off

[137] "Coast Guard Candor," *Seattle Times*, January 17, 2007, http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com/cgibin/texis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=diveed17&date=20070117&query=Coast+Guard+Candor [accessed February 10, 2007].

the same set of information. This will prevent conflicting messages coming out of the same agency.

- ***Ensure anyone who might possibly act as a spokesperson has a baseline of media relations training***. Schedules change, traffic delays people from getting to the interview location. If someone else needs to step in, they will at least understand what is permissible to say and what isn't, plus they will be less anxious about having to speak to the media.
- ***Have a plan B to disseminate information***. What if phones go down? Loss of electricity? Just because you don't have power doesn't mean the media will not cover the story. Find alternative means to disseminate the information, such as text messaging, or even runners.
- ***Max disclosure w/ minimum delay***. Do not delay bad news—part of being frank and open is to also be timely.
- ***Have a comprehensive public affairs plan known by the organization.*** A plan that no one knows about is not a plan. Not only must an agency have a plan, it must train affected personnel on how it works and ensure they comprehend it.

The CG met these rules in its public affairs posture during Hurricane Katrina.[138] The CG enjoyed positive public perception, not just because it performed well operationally, but because it was able to get its story out to the public very effectively, despite some serious logistical challenges. Other agencies also performed well during the response to Hurricane Katrina, but they did not fair as well in the media or public's perception. For instance, Louisiana was able to evacuate approximately 90% of its citizens out of the impact zone saving tens of thousands of lives. Very little coverage of that fact made it into news broadcasts, leaving a perception that more people were stranded in New Orleans than actually were. As bad as the situation in New Orleans was, people believed it was even worse.[139]

[138] Recently, there was a situation where the Coast Guard did not initially meet these rules, and paid the price in negative media coverage and significantly reduced training opportunities for mounted automatic weapons training on the Great Lakes. Once the Coast Guard realized the public was outraged, it began following the 7 Rules by saying it made a mistake in not seeking public input, held several public meetings to get the public's input, and ultimately scrubbed the proposal based upon that input. The Coast Guard has told the public it will work with it prior to proposing another weapon training plan.

[139] Susannah Rosenblatt and James Rainey, "Katrina Takes a Toll on Truth, News Accuracy," *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 2005, http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-rumors27sep27,0,3794602.story?coll=la-home-headlines [accessed September 28, 2005].

## C. TRUST

The concept of trust has come up several times before in this thesis. Trust doesn't happen in a vacuum, indeed people and agencies must prove they are trustworthy before another entity will accept what they are saying as the truth. In order to gain this trust, both the agency and the media must try to work together prior to an event, to get to know each other. This way, if an incident occurs, you won't be trying to feel each other out during the height of the crisis.

It is not enough for an agency to trust the media—the agency must learn to trust its employees. This can be harder than building trust with an agency's stakeholders. If it doesn't trust its employers, either to get the job done, or to speak successfully to the media, then the agency will have employees who will not strive to do their best, as no one likes to be treated like they don't know what they're doing.

The CG trusts its employees because it trains them, makes sure they know what they're doing and tells them that they are trusted. This isn't to say that the CG provides no oversight to ensure work is done correctly. Instead, there is a "journeyman" system which gives its personnel more and more responsibility as they move up the ranks. The other facet to this is the CG's small size—the CG trusts its people with little oversight because it is not resourced to operate any other way. While there are periodic problems, for the most part this system, which has been in place for over 200 years, works well and has allowed the CG to be nimble and flexible enough to react to rapidly changing environments.

In order for an agency to allow its personnel to have less oversight, it must train them to be more self-directed and then allow them to do so.

## D. BUILD A PUBLIC AFFAIRS INFRASTRUCTURE

Having an effective message dissemination system is more than having a handful of spokespeople. It takes a systematic approach, with procedures, training, equipment and personnel. The following steps should be taken to begin building the infrastructure; the culture will come in time as an agency's personnel become socialized to the thought of speaking to the media without career fear.

- ***Promulgate a Public Affairs policy similar to the CG's***. Allow personnel at all levels to speak about what they know, provide clear guidance on what can and cannot be released to the public, provide talking points as appropriate to keep everyone on message, be transparent and require maximum disclosure with minimum delay.

- ***Provide media training to all personnel who may come in contact with the media***. At lower levels in the organization this training can be fairly basic. As a person moves higher in the organization, more advanced media training should occur commensurate with that person's responsibilities—the higher in the organization, the more the person needs crisis communications skills.

- ***Provide risk communications training for mid to upper level management.*** They need to understand the public's perception of the agency's action. It does not matter if *you* understand that a policy is not risky to the public, it is what *they* think that counts in the court of public perception.

- ***Become more involved in the communities in which the agency is located***. Participate (as government rules allow) in advisory groups, service clubs and business associations. This way, instead of being faceless bureaucrats, community leaders will see the agency as a trusted gent.

- ***Seek opportunities to tell agency's story to the media***. Pitch stories to local reporters. This not only gives the agency's personnel practice in talking with the media in a non-adversarial, low consequence situations, it serves to educate the reporter on what the agency does—and will pay dividends should a crisis occur.

- ***Determine what equipment and services are needed to allow agency public affairs personnel to perform their jobs when away from their home base.*** This can include computers with wireless modems, websites, cell phones with cameras and "go-kits" with sunscreen, hand sanitizer, boots and other necessary items to stay in the field.

- ***Have an "evergreen" story ready for immediate release.*** These background stories help to explain what the agency does and the people who do it. They can be written and put on a shelf (updated periodically) for use when a story in the news is related to the work done by that agency. For instance, an agency with search dogs could write an evergreen story on how the dogs are trained. Then, if a building collapses and there's a multi-day search, the media will be scrambling to fill the 24/7 void. If the agency PA person says to a reporter "I've got a story on dog training", it will probably get airtime. This is a win-win for the media and the agency and will probably improve their relationship.

## E. TRUST = EMPOWERMENT

Employer's trust of employees was discussed above. Once an agency trusts its employees, it should empower them to act when there is no clear guidance. During the most chaotic periods of the Hurricane Katrina response, CG personnel, who had been trained and acculturated to act without waiting for further guidance, acted on their own authority, including the public affairs personnel. They were given guidance prior to the storm's arrival and were expected to act accordingly to get the CG's story out to the public. This decentralized control was the key to the CG's success, but may be difficult to replicate in other components of the government.

## F. OPERATIONAL SECURITY DOES NOT REMOVE THE REQUIREMENT TO INFORM THE PUBLIC

If the circumstances of the incident require approval from a headquarters level prior to releasing information to the media, e.g., in the aftermath of a terrorism event, leaders must remember that they still have a duty to inform the public on the actions the being taken. While operational security is paramount, there are ways to communicate to the public the actions they need to take to protect themselves, as well as some of the actions being taken by that agency to protect the public. In addition to law enforcement types of incidents, there are other circumstances that may require field personnel to go to higher authority for permission to release information. In those cases, a process must be put in place to ensure the time between asking for permission and message releasing is as short as possible. Training must be provided to headquarters personnel to ensure they understand the importance of quick turnaround on media release requests. Remember, if the reporters don't get the story from you, they will get it elsewhere. Trying to control the message will mean no control of the message. If information is not forthcoming, especially during a period of extreme anxiety on the part of the public, they will lose confidence in the government. This must be avoided.

## G. INTEGRATION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS INTO THE OPERATION

Public Affairs cannot be an afterthought. Many responders consider public affairs and especially media relations, to be a necessary but annoying evil that must be addressed

during a response, but they try to minimize the public affairs activities. They sometimes treat the Information Officer as a member of the media, placing them far from the Command Post, not telling them the current situation, out of fear that they will give sensitive information to the media.

As a consequence, the Information Officer ends up with the oldest information and in reaction mode anytime he or she interacts with the media. Unsurprising, the media coverage at such events tends to be critical of the response, thereby angering the Incident Commander, which makes him or her less likely to engage the media and so the cycle repeats. Obviously, this is not helpful.

In the past, Safety and Health has also been seen as an afterthought at incidents. The author was involved with many oil spill responses in the late 1990s where workers balked at wearing personal protective equipment because it was uncomfortable and their bosses yelled at them because the bulky equipment hampered their dexterity. Now that protection of personnel is typically the number one objective at any incident response, the Safety Officer is brought in very early in the planning process to ensure safety issues are fully integrated and therefore won't slow down the response. While not perfect, safety gets significantly more attention than it used to.[140]

The same thing must be done for public affairs, especially in crisis communications situations. In the mid-1990s, the CG oil spill response community adopted a practice known as "Best Response" which described how a response must include all facets of activity, including operations, safety and health, stakeholder support and media relations.[141] Why? Because if agencies don't let their stakeholders and the public know what they're doing, those audiences will assume nothing is happening, which lowers the perception of those agencies in the minds of the public.

---

[140] Author's experience: as tactical plans are drafted to respond to an incident, the Safety Officer reviews them as they are being written to ensure any necessary safety controls are integrated at the beginning, when it's easier to do so for less time/money.

[141] Captain Joseph Kuchin and Captain Larry Hereth, *Measuring Response: A Balanced Response Scorecard for Evaluating Success*, http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mor/articles/proceed.pdf [accessed January 5, 2007], 1.

As mentioned earlier, the CG has learned that in addition to including an incident objective dealing with health and safety for every incident response, it also includes objectives to establish a JIC and create a media and stakeholder support plan early in the response. Integrating the public affairs piece early in the event ensures that if the event gets more complicated, the Information Officer will already know what the Incident Commander wants and can act accordingly, saving crucial time during a chaotic period.

The only way for agencies to understand how an integrated public affairs posture can work is to make a point of integrating public affairs into its day to day operations. For instance, if someone gets promoted, ensure the media are invited to the ceremony. This way, an agency's Information Officer can become proficient at jumping the logistical hurdles (e.g., getting clearances for media personnel to enter the building), enabling quick resolution of such problems during an actual incident.

The CG succeeded during Hurricane Katrina because it recognized that crisis communications must be integrated into its overarching response plans. Communications and all that entails (not just the message, but the logistics of getting that message out to the public) cannot be an afterthought. This realization did not just occur in the immediate run up to the storm. In years of conducting response operations to incidents large and small, the CG has learned, through trial and error, which it needs to keep its stakeholders and public informed in order to recover from an incident as soon as possible. Past events, such as the EXXON VALDEZ response taught the CG that not meeting the public's need for information gave the perception that it was not doing all that it could to mitigate the effects of the spill. CG leaders realized that despite the logistical challenges of getting public affairs personnel up to an incident site and facilitating members of the media to get their stories, it must meet its information sharing obligation to the public.

Finally, a good public affairs posture will not overcome bad operational performance. An agency must perform its duties well and then tell the public what it did; this allows the public to make the determination of how good the performance was. The public has grown savvy in the face of relentless media messaging and can spot "spin" a

mile away.[142] It requires a culture that recognizes the importance of integrating crisis communications into the overall crisis response plan which will enable those well trained personnel to get the agency's message out to the public.

[142] Lukaszewski, *Seven Dimensions of Crisis Communication Management.*

# APPENDIX A: SOURCES FOR CONSTRUCTING HURRICANE KATRINA TIMELINES

**Sources for Hurricane Katrina Timeline:**


U.S. Coast Guard, Historian's Office, *Hurricane Katrina Timeline Spreadsheet* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, 2005).

Frances Fragos Townsend, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2006), http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessonslearned.Pdf [Accessed May 20, 2006].

U.S. Congress, House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *Hearing on Preparedness and Response by the State of Alabama* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 9, 2005) https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053106-02.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

U.S. Congress, House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *Hearing on Preparedness and Response by the State of Mississipp* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 7, 2005), https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053006-01.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

U.S. Congress, House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *Hearing on Preparedness and Response in Louisiana* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 14, 2005), https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-052506-11.pdf [accessed October 31, 2006].

U.S. Congress, House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, *Hearing on the Military's Role* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 27, 2005), https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053106-04.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

Elana DeLozier, *Hurricane Katrina Timeline* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 2005), http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/homeland/katrinatimeline.pdf [Accessed December 20, 2005].

**Sources for Coast Guard Activity Timeline:**

**Interviews:**

**Coast Guard Operational Commanders and Department Heads:**

Rear Admiral Larry Hereth (Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District)

Captain James Bjostad (Commander, Sector Mobile)

Captain Frank Paskewich (Commander, Sector New Orleans)

Captain Bruce Jones (Commanding Officer, Air Station New Orleans)

Commander Scott Paradis (Prevention Department Head, Sector New Orleans)

Commander Barry Compagnoni (Response Department Head, Sector Mobile)

**Coast Guard Public Affairs Personnel:**

Commander Jeff Carter (Chief, Coast Guard Media Relations)

Lieutenant Commander Glynn Smith (Pacific Area Public Affairs Officer)

Lieutenant Rob Wyman (Eighth Coast Guard District Public Affairs Officer)

Chief Warrant Officer Brandon Brewer (Public Information Assist Team)

**Documents:**

U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Coast Guard: Observations on the Preparation, Response, and Recovery Missions Related to Hurricane Katrina*. Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, July 2006.http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06903.pdf [accessed October 29, 2006].

U.S. Coast Guard, Historian's Office. *Hurricane Katrina Timeline Spreadsheet*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, 2005.

U.S. Coast Guard, *Marine Safety Unit Galveston Severe Weather Plan*, (Galveston: U.S. Coast Guard, 2004).

# APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

## COMMUNICATIONS PLAN LIGHTERING/VESSEL REMOVAL IN ALABAMA/MISSISSIPPI [DATED 10/5/2005]

**Purpose:** Stakeholders who are directly impacted by these operations are faced with an uncertainty as to what the Coast Guard and its partner agencies are doing to remove vessels, debris and other environmental hazards and what the removal process will mean for them and their property. It is the duty of the Coast Guard and its partner agencies to proactively release timely and accurate information concerning the removal process.

**Scope:** This plan applies to all communications activities during the operation, which may include: media relations (press releases, story ideas, press conferences, interviews, etc.); community relations (town hall meetings, open houses, face-to-face discussions, focus groups, etc.); and internal relations (public affairs guidance, talking points, command messages, plan evaluation, etc.)

**Background:** In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, several commercial and recreational vessels and debris were deposited inland, which pose health and safety risks to the surrounding communities as well as the ecosystem within the debris area.

**Authority:** The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) and Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Parts 1500-1508 (40 CFR 1500-1508) require federal agencies to consider the potential environmental consequences of proposed actions and alternatives. Executive Order (EO) 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality (amended by EO 11991), provides policy directing the federal government to take leadership in protecting and enhancing the environment.

Objectives of the Communications Plan:

1. To inform/educate the commercial fishing/shrimping industry about the removal efforts and its potential impact(s).
2. To inform/educate recreational boaters about the removal efforts and its potential impact(s).
3. To address stakeholder concerns during/after the recovery effort.
4. To improve understanding and clarify the role of the Coast Guard and other partner agencies involved in the removal process.
5. To retain the credibility of the Coast Guard.

Risk Communication Tactics for Primary Target Audiences:

1. Concerned citizens: open house, face-to face meetings with community organizations, media (press releases, story ideas, press briefs and editorial boards), hotline, community service spots on local radio channel, pamphlets, flyers.

2. Commercial Fishermen: open houses, face-to-face meetings, press releases targeted to trade publications, radio community service spots in English and Vietnamese, hotline, pamphlets, flyers (in English and Vietnamese).
3. Recreational Boaters: open house, face-to face meetings, press releases, story ideas, press briefs and editorial boards, radio community service spots, hotline.
4. Local/State Government: work with liaison officer/governmental affairs.

Secondary Target Audiences:
1. Neighborhood Associations, Community Leaders
2. Professional Organizations, Trade Groups
3. Media
4. Environmental Organizations
5. Coast Guard, partner agencies

Potential Partners:
1. EPA
2. ACOE
3. FEMA
4. ADEM
5. MDEQ
6. U.S. Navy Superintendent of Salvage

Audience Profile:
In an Oct. 1 town hall meeting in Bayou La Batre, citizens of that community expressed concerns about vessel salvage and recovery issues. Other potential areas of concern are costs to citizens/fishermen to salvage their boats, reimbursements for fuel, fines and staging areas for claiming their property. One known barrier to communication will be language due to the fact that a large segment of commercial fishermen are Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees; therefore, a translator should be available when engaging those stakeholders. Another barrier might be communicating with those who are already emotionally and financially burdened by hardships suffered post hurricane (mental noise).

Key Messages:
“We live in the affected areas too and understand the difficulties we all face in recovering and rebuilding after this disaster, which is why we are committed to the efficient and timely removal of these vessels. We have a plan in place with the Army Corps of Engineers and we will carry out that plan until each vessel is recovered or removed.”

“The Coast Guard and its partner agencies are currently focused on three objectives:
1. Removing and disposing of fuels, oils, lubricants, bilge oil and other hazardous materials from vessels.
2. Recovering both commercial and recreational vessels that have been deposited inland due to Hurricane Katrina.
3. Continuously assessing the environmental impact of the recovery efforts.”

“We will remove all fuels, oils, lubricants, bilge oil, batteries and other hazardous materials from vessels due to the fact that the liquid cargo is most likely contaminated. These liquids need to be removed so that we may move the vessel(s). We will not return the fuel or oil to vessel owners nor reimburse owners for the fuel that is removed. We truly understand and appreciate what this means to owners, but it is a necessary precaution to minimize the environmental impact of this operation.”

“We want to work with local communities to remedy this issue, and we ask for their assistance in recovering these vessels so that they may be re-floated.”

“A hazardous material and vessel removal hotline has been established to answer questions about hazardous material disposal and vessel removal issues at 1-866-287-6935.”

Evaluation

- Were objectives met?
- Were the FOSC and partner agencies involved in the communication plan?
- Did the information reach the specified target audiences?
- Were the right messages released to specified stakeholders?
- Was the content of the message(s) sufficient?
- Were the right communications channels used?

Schedule/Plan of Action:

- Distribution of internal public affairs guidance
- ID/contact influencers in fishing communities to determine level of understanding/concern
- Coordinate with local EOCs to identify local stakeholders, disseminate information and gauge level of public concern/interest
- Call outs to local media to pitch one on one with FOSC
- Press release outlining response efforts to date
- Town Hall meeting scheduled for Oct. 5 in Ocean Springs, Miss.
- Town Hall meeting scheduled for Oct. 8 in Bay St. Louis

Sign Off page

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# APPENDIX C: SAMPLE PUBLIC AFFAIRS GUIDANCE PROVIDED TO RESPONDERS

ESF 10 MARITIME RESPONSE FORWARD OPERATING BASE BATON ROUGE INFORMATION OFFICER

**TALKING POINTS / Q&A (updated 23 OCT 05 by PA1 Chad Saylor)**

Please refer to the latest ESF-10 report from FOB Baton Rouge for:

- Latest volume estimates (spilled, removed, evaporated, remaining)
- Wildlife impact numbers
- Personnel and equipment numbers

**General Q&A**

Q: How would you characterize these cleanups, from start to finish? How do you know when you're done?

A: There are three stages of oil spill response:

1. Source control and removal
   - Focuses on containment, recovery of mobile oil and shoreline cleanup
   - Requires federal and state oversight
2. Managed recovery
   - Consists of any final cleanup activities to mitigate residual pollution; typically includes use of sorbent booms, demobilization and cleaning equipment and final disposal issues. (*Refer to transition documents)*
   - Requires federal and state oversight
3. Natural recovery
   - All equip. has been demobed
   - No bioremediation taking place
   - Area is safe for the public
   - No federal oversight required

We have members of our environmental unit, from NOAA and La. DEQ, assess each site and, if satisfied, sign it off to tentatively move from one phase to another. Once the FOSC gives final approval, the site can move into the next phase of cleanup (.

Q: What's the difference between a major, medium and minor spill?

A: A major spill is classified as 100,000 gallons or more. A medium is spill is 10,000 gallons or more. Minor spills are less than 10,000 gallons. Coast Guard pollutions investigators assess reported spills to determine their severity.

The public should call the National Response Center at 800-424-8802 to report spills.

Q: How would you compare this spill to other spills/this pollution to other pollution incidents?

A: No two spills are alike. Our responders train every day to respond quickly and safely to environmental incidents. We do our best, while working alongside our federal, state and local partner agencies, to assess, respond to and oversee the cleanup of oil spills.

Discuss cleanup efforts to date using ESF-10 209 (ICS form).

Q: How has this massive pollution/spill affected the environment?

A: About eight million gallons of oil spilled throughout Southeast Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina struck. The damage caused by a spill depends on several factors such as type of oil, weather conditions, season and many other factors. In general, large spills cause widespread immediate impacts and potential long-term impacts to parts of affected ecosystems. We work very hard with our response partner agencies (specifically, DEQ, DNR, USFWS, NOAA, etc.) to respond effectively and efficiently to these spills and minimize negative impacts to the environment.

Discuss Coast Guard role/unified response to reduce impact. Refer to necessary agency reps (NOAA, LOSCO, F&W, etc.) for SME messages.

Q: Why do your numbers for spill amounts keep changing/I spoke to someone else and they gave me a different number?

A: During many ongoing oil spill cleanups, figures for recovered, spilled, evaporated and dispersed oil are estimates. We rely on the expert opinion of our pollution response personnel in the field. However, because spills are dynamic events, numbers are subject to change.

Q: What are you doing in the areas around the pollution sites to make sure they're safe?

A: Every work site has a site safety plan, which, depending on the circumstances, could, among other things, cover: air monitoring, heat stress information, animal and plant safety, detailed information about the kinds of chemicals personnel will be near, first aid supplies and decontamination information. We also have safety personnel on-scene at the sites on a rotating basis while work is being done.

Q: How much are all these spills going to cost to clean up?

A: Our latest projected estimate is that, for the portion of the pollution cleanup that we're responsible for, the cost from start to finish will be approximately $267 million.

Q: What are you doing with wildlife that has been oiled?

A: Our work with affected wildlife is being closely monitored by personnel from both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Oiled birds and other animals that are captured alive are sent to a rehabilitation center in Houma, La., where they are cleaned and eventually released, if possible. Dead birds and animals found in the field are recovered, documented and disposed of appropriately.

Q: What is the difference between the Coast Guard's and the EPA's responsibilities for cleaning up spills?

A: In general, the Coast Guard responds to hazardous materials on the water, the EPA responds to hazardous materials on land.

In regards to post-Hurricane Katrina operations, the Coast Guard and EPA in Southeast Louisiana are working together to clean up pollution. Since the scale of this response is so large, the Coast Guard and EPA specifically agreed to a division of work—the Coast Guard is coordinating the response to all oil spills on and immediately adjacent to navigable waters, including oil contained and floating within secondary containment (e.g., berms) and all hazardous materials releases in navigable waters, including floating containers. The EPA is coordinating responses to hazardous materials releases on land and in pre-designated inland and coastal zones.

***MURPHY-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS***

Q: What role does the Coast Guard have at Murphy Oil spill site?

A: The Coast Guard and EPA are working together and have an agreement to divide the work at that site—each agency is doing what they do best to get the pollution cleaned up and we're both working within our normal authorities.

Specifically at the Murphy site, we agreed to coordinate:

- removal of oil in the Forty Arpent, Delaronde, Corinne, Meraux and Intercepting canals.
- removal of oil in the tank farm containment area (i.e., bermed containment) and oil in the adjacent unnamed drainage canal.
- we will be responsible for demobilizing all the equipment and personnel involved with the cleanup at our portion of the Murphy site.
- and, we're coordinating all the financial accounting for those locations we're responsible for cleaning.

The EPA, per our agreement with them, is coordinating:

- the cleanup of residential property and property that the public can access, like parks and schools, that have been impacted by oil.

Q: What kind of oil leaked from the Murphy site?

A: The oil that leaked from the damaged tank at Murphy Oil was a blend of four different kinds of light crude oil.

Q: What are the health hazards associated with the oil and what can people do to protect themselves?

A: Crude oil can be a health hazard to people if it comes in contact with their skin and eyes, if the fumes are inhaled and if it is ingested.

***ACUTE EXPOSURE SYMPTOMS***

SKIN: When crude oil comes in contact with skin, it is an irritant – long-term exposure can cause drying, cracking, redness, itching, burning or inflammation. First aid for skin contact involves immediately removing contaminated clothing and washing skin with soap and water. Clothes should be laundered before worn again.

INHALATION: When fumes from crude oil are inhaled, it may cause a headache, nasal and respiratory irritation, nausea, drowsiness, breathlessness and fatigue. At high concentrations, inhalation can cause central nervous system depression, convulsions and loss of consciousness. First aid for inhaling crude oil fumes involves removing the exposed person from the area and into fresh air and get medical attention promptly.

EYE CONTACT: Crude oil also is an irritant to eyes. If eye contact occurs, immediately flush eyes for a minimum of 15 minutes, occasionally lifting the lower and upper lids and get medical attention promptly.

INGESTION: If ingested, crude oil may cause burning of the mouth and gastrointestinal disturbances. It also may cause vomiting and diarrhea and depression of the central nervous system. If crude oil is ingested, do not induce vomiting – drink large quantities of water and seek medical attention promptly.

Use sufficient ventilation when in a closed space that contains crude oil – open all doors and windows and use fans to decrease fumes and circulate fresh air. Use proper personal protective equipment when handling items that have crude oil on them – safety glasses, goggle or a face shield; gloves made of nitrile, neoprene or other oil resistant materials. Wear clothing and boots that are oil resistant and limit oil contact with skin.

***IN-SITU BURN SPECIFIC QUESTIONS***

Q: Why was an in situ burn used at the Chevron Empire facility?

A: The *in situ* burn was used at the Chevron Pipeline; Empire Facility, in Buras, La., to remove some of the more than 100 barrels of oil in a 47-acre marsh adjacent to the facility. The controlled burn, which did not cover the entire marsh area, was conducted on prepared sections Wednesday and Thursday. The *in situ* burn was chosen as the best environmental removal method to reduce impacts of oil in the sensitive habitat, as well as reduce impact to wildlife. The plan used for the burn was proposed by Chevron and approved by the Unified Command here and the local Parish government.

(note: more information is in an in situ burn fact sheet on our www.uscgstormwatch.com news and info site)

# APPENDIX D: MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD SECTORNEW ORLEANS

# MARINE SAFETY BULLETIN

Volume V, Issue XXXV AUGUST 2005

## Set Port Condition WHISKEY

In preparation for Hurricane Katrina, Sector New Orleans has set Port Condition WHISKEY in accordance with the Maritime Hurricane Contingency Port Plan (MHCPP). Port Condition WHISKEY is set when gale force winds are predicted to arrive at the Southwest Pass Entrance Sea Buoy within 72 hours. (You may review the MHCPP online at http://www.uscg.mil/d8/mso/nola/)

The COTP will make notifications as soon as waterway and bridge closures become apparent.

All vessels entering and departing the COTP Zone New Orleans are reminded to update their NOA with any changes to their arrival or departure information. (33 CFR 160.208, 33 CFR 160.212)

The COTP has modified the specific actions outlined in the MHCPP. The following precautionary measures are provided for your consideration. All vessels and facilities operating below the Huey P. Long Bridge are strongly urged to implement these measures:

- Secure missile hazards and clear nonessential equipment and loose gear.
- Secure/remove hazardous materials or cargos to a safe location, especially drums.
- Oil transfer terminals not engaged in transfer operations should drain all loading arms and hoses of product, blank off hoses, and empty/clean small discharge containment.
- Mooring lines doubled up with due consideration given to the effects of predicted storm surge.
- If moored, outboard anchor rigged at a short stay.
- Ensure sufficient number of officers and crew onboard to tend mooring lines, and/or get underway.
- Vessel ballasted to ensure maximum safety.
- All side ports, hatches, portholes, and other openings are closed and secured.
- All fire fighting equipment is ready for immediate use.
- A continuous radio watch maintained on Channel 16 and 67 VHF-FM.
- If at anchorage, at least two anchors set.
- If at anchorage, vessels should remain ready to get underway within 15 minutes.
- Spare mooring lines and/or wires should be readily available.

You are strongly encouraged to review your existing hurricane plan or develop a plan if you do not have one. It is extremely important to decide in advance how to minimize your risk and be prepared to evacuate, if necessary.

Sector New Orleans: (504) 589-6196
Marine Safety Unit Morgan City: (985) 380-5320
Integrated Command Center (24 Hour): (504) 846-5923/5924
Vessel Traffic Center (24 Hour): (504) 589-2780 or VHF-FM channels 16 or 67
National Response Center (24 Hour): 1-800-424-8802

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

*Office of Public Affairs*
*U.S. Coast Guard*

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard

Press Release
Date: Aug. 27, 2005
Contact: Lt. j.g. Sharmaine Jones
(251) 583-7904

## MEDIA ADVISORY:
## COAST GUARD PREPARES FOR HURRICANE KATRINA

**MOBILE, Ala.** - The Captain of the Port (COTP) Mobile Zone is issuing a safety advisory today for all commercial and privately owned vessels. The following guidance is issued for all vessels operating in the COPT Mobile Zone:

1. The COTP Mobile has set Hurricane Condition X-Ray (Condition Three). All ports in the Mississippi, Alabama and the Florida panhandle will remain open for departures of vessels: however, no vessels will be allowed into port at this time with the exception of inland barge traffic. Anticipate no variances or waivers to be granted. It is anticipated that all ports will be closed to all traffic no later than 2 a.m. Monday.
2. All ocean-going, commercial vessels and ocean-going barges greater than 200 gross tons not approved to remain in port must depart beyond the sea buoy prior to the setting of Condition Yankee (Condition Two), which will be no later than 2 p.m. Sunday. None of these vessels are permitted to anchor within territorial waters.
3. Wharf operators must notify the COTP of any dangerous cargo to remain in open areas.
4. Recreational boaters should make preparations in advance to safeguard their vessels from the impending hurricane. All waterways within the COTP Mobile Zone will be closed to all traffic no later than 2 a.m. Monday. Any persons transiting the waterways after 4 p.m. Sunday are advised that there will be little, if any, search and rescue capabilities until well after the hurricane passes. Any vessel operating within the COTP Mobile Zone after the waterways are closed will be subject to serious penalties and/or fines.
5. Recreational boaters should be advised that Sector Mobile's area of responsibility will see a significant increase in commercial traffic heading eastward in preparation for Hurricane Katrina. Please make note of this and prepare accordingly.
6. Barge fleets shall reduce their fleets as much as possible and begin to shift unloaded barges to appropriate safe shelter.
7. Existing security zones established by COTP Mobile will remain in force during severe weather. Unauthorized vessels transiting or moored within a security zone may be subject to penalty, post storm operational controls and/or security boarding as necessary to ensure security of the port.

The Coast Guard will continue to send updates in the form of Marine Safety Information Bulletins and Broadcast Notice to Mariners. Current port and waterway status can be obtained from the Sector Mobile Voice Mail Announcement system at (251) 441-5080. Additional information can be obtained by visiting www.uscgstormwatch.com.

# APPENDIX F: GUIDELINES TO HELP IDENTIFY DIFFERENT PUBLICS

This information is taken from the NRT Joint Information Center Model, Appendix F, Community Feedback Supplement.

## WHEN SHOULD COMMUNITY POINTS OF CONTACT BE IDENTIFIED?

Some response agencies pre-plan the actions that might be taken during an

emergent situation. The pre-planning should involve identifying community points of contact and determining baseline evaluation of community information needs.

## WHO ARE THE USUAL COMMUNITY POINTS OF CONTACT?

The community points of contact are also known as community members, community publics, community stakeholders, or the affected community. The community points of contact include the persons who live, work, or have an interest in events occurring at a specific location. Often these persons reside in the proximity of the location.

In addition, the points of contact can include those persons who evaluate the issue or situation as having an impact on their values. An example might be environmental activists who respond to all oil spills, irrespective of their geographic location.

Community points of contact include, but are not limited to, the following: local, state and federal elected and appointed officials; civic, business and economic group representatives; neighbors, social groups, social agencies and public health groups, interest groups for environmental, economic and business issues; local, regional and national media.

## WHO ARE THE INFLUENTIALS?

Influentials or opinion leaders are the small group of community members who make or have important impact on community decisions, attitudes, or behaviors. A community member might exert influence by virtue of their position or rank within an important organization. Some community members exert influence based on their perceived power or their extensive network of community contacts. Some community members have organizational authority to make decisions and so are influential.

Finally, some community members have an established reputation for participation in community issues. Their influential effect is based on their knowledge of issues, their ability to be involved and their actual participation and interaction. In some situations, an influential can be identified with specific demographic parameters.

## WHAT IS SELF-IDENTIFICATION?

Self-identification involves the community members becoming involved in environmental, health, or safety issues by participating in public meetings, being impacted by ongoing issues, or submitting comments or requesting assistance.

Their involvement helps to identify them as important community members.

**WHAT IS THIRD PARTY IDENTIFICATION?**

Third party identification involves obtaining feedback from other response agencies, other affected community members, or opinion leaders.
JIC or Liaison Officer staff who have worked with the local community previously usually have work experience or knowledge about community points of contact.

**WHAT ARE OTHER METHODS TO IDENTIFY COMMUNITY POINTS OF CONTACT?**

Lists of groups or individual community members can be obtained from the Yellow Pages, chambers of commerce, city directories, direct mailing lists and contract researchers. Maps provide a basis for geographic definition of the affected community. Historical analysis considers lists of prior participants, correspondence files, media content analysis and library files on past issues.
Most yellow pages list numerous categories of potential community contacts. The listing for “mailing lists” includes contract researchers who have or can prepare lists for specific community groups or issues.

# APPENDIX G: LIST OF PUBLICS

## COMMUNITY PUBLICS

Community media
Mass
Specialized
Community leaders
Public officials
Educators
Religious leaders
Professionals
Executives
Bankers
Union leaders
Ethnic leaders
Neighborhood leaders
Community organizations
Civic
Service
Social
Business
Cultural
Religious
Youth
Political
Special interest groups
Other

## GOVERNMENT PUBLICS

Federal
Legislative branch
Representatives, staff, committee personnel
Senators, staff, committee personnel
Executive branch
President
White House staff, advisers, committees
Cabinet officers, departments, agencies, commissions
January 21, 2000 NRT Joint Information Center Model F-22
State
Legislative branch
Representatives, delegates, staff, committee personnel
Senators, staff, committee personnel

Executive branch
Governor
Governor's staff, committee personnel
Cabinet officers, departments, agencies, commissions
County
County executive
Other county officials, commissions, departments
City
Mayor or city manager
City council
Other city officials, commissions, departments

**CONSUMER PUBLICS**

Company employees
Customers
Professionals
Middle class
Working class
Minorities
Other
Activist consumer groups
Consumer publications
Community media, mass and specialized
Community leaders and organizations

**SPECIAL PUBLICS**

Media consumed by this special public
Mass
Specialized
Leaders of this special public
Public officials
Professional leaders
Ethnic leaders
Neighborhood leaders
January 21, 2000 NRT Joint Information Center Model F-23
Organizations composing this special public
Civic
Political
Service
Business
Cultural
Religious
Youth

Other

**PUBLIC HEALTH PUBLICS**

Local health educators
Local physicians
Public health nurses
Community health workers
Unlicensed health professionals
Members and volunteers of voluntary health agencies
Clients of health related services

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

# LIST OF REFERENCES


Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. *A Primer on Health Risk Communication Principles and Practices.* Atlanta: Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, n.d. http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HEC/primer.html [accessed 17 October 2005].

Brown, Gerald R. *Now is Too Late2: Survival in an Era of Instant News*. Bellingham: Edensveil, 2006.

Bush, George W. *Management of Domestic Incidents*, Homeland Security Presidential Directive/HSPD-5. February 28, 2003, http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030228-9.html [Accessed December 18, 2006].

"Coast Guard Candor." *Seattle Times*, January 17, 2007. http://archives.seattletimes.nwsource.com/cgibin/texis.cgi/web/vortex/display?slug=diveed17&date=20070117&query=Coast+Guard+Candor [accessed February 10, 2007].

Cohn, Robin. *The PR Crisis Bible: How to Take Charge of the Media When all Hell Breaks Loose.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Coombs, W. Timothy. "Impact of Past Crises on Current Crisis Communication." *The Journal of Business Communication*.Urbana: 2004. Vol. 41, Iss. 3.

Covello, Vincent. "Risk Communication Slides." April, 2002. http://www.nwcphp.org/docs/pdf/april02color.pdf [accessed on 19 Oct 2005].

Covello, Vincent and Frederick Allen. *Seven Cardinal Rules of Risk Communication.* 1988. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/epa/risk_comm_principles.pdf [accessed December 28, 2006].

Defense Threat Reduction Agency et. al. *Human Behavior and WMD Crisis /Risk Communication Workshop-Final Report*. No City Given: Defense Threat Reduction Agency, 2001. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/dtra/human-behavior-wmd.pdf [accessed February 1, 2006].

DeLozier, Elana. *Hurricane Katrina Timeline.* Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 2005. http://www.brookings.edu/fp/projects/homeland/katrinatimeline.pdf [Accessed December 20, 2005].

Horsley, J. Suzanne, Randolph T. Barker. "Toward a Synthesis Model for Crisis Communication in the Public Sector." *Journal of Business and Technical* Communication Vol. 16, Iss. 4 (2002): 406-440.

Hurricane Isabel Assessment Team. *An Assessment: Virginia's Response to Hurricane Isabel.* Arlington: Hurricane Isabel Assessment Team, 2003. http://pub.sysplan.com/Hurricane_Isabel_Assessment_Exec_Summary.pdf [accessed February 4, 2006].

Kreitemeyer, Captain George. *The Coast Guardsman's Manual.* Eighth Ed. Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991.

Kuchin, Captain Joseph and Captain Larry Hereth. *Measuring Response: A Balanced Response Scorecard for Evaluating Success.* http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/mor/articles/proceed.pdf [accessed January 5, 2007].

Light, Paul. *The Katrina Effect on American Preparedness.* New York: Center for Catastrophic Preparedness and Response, New York University, 2005. http://www.nyu.edu/ccpr/katrina-effect.pdf [accessed February 1, 2006].

Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP). *Lessons Learned-Hurricanes Katrina and Rita*. Baton Rouge, LA: LOHSEP, n.d. http://katrina.lsu.edu/downloads/LOHSEP%20LESSONS%20LEARNED.pdf [accessed October 31, 2006].

Lovgren, Stefan. "'CSI Effect" Is Mixed Blessing for Real Crime Labs." *National Geographic News.* Washington D.C.: National Geographic News, 2004. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/09/0923_040923_csi.html [accessed February 4, 2006].

Lukaszewski, James E. *Seven Dimensions of Crisis Communication Management: A Strategic Analysis and Planning Model.* 1998, http://www.e911.com/monos/A001.html [accessed December 2006].

Lundgren, Regina and Andrea McMakin. *Risk Communication-A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks.* Columbus: Battelle Press, 2004.

National Center for Disaster Preparedness. *Snapshot 2005: Where the American Public Stands on Terrorism and Preparedness Four Years after September 11.* New York: Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, 2005. http://www.ncdp.mailman.columbia.edu/files/NCDP 2005 Annual Survey Overview.pdf [accessed February 4, 2006].

The National Response Team. *Joint Information Center Model.* Washington, DC: The National Response Team, 2000. http://www.uscg.mil/hq/nsfweb/download/JIC%20MANUAL.pdf [accessed 26 October 2005].

The National Strategy Forum, "The Public Perception of Terrorism Threats." *The National Strategy Forum Review* Volume 15, Issue 1, (2005).

http://www.nationalstrategy.com/index_files/Page3173.htm [accessed February 4, 2006].

Paulison, David R. *Guidance on Working Media Engagement during Disasters.* Washington, D.C.: FEMA, August 26, 2006.

Pew Center for the People and the Press. *Bottom-Line Pressures Now Hurting Coverage, Say Journalists.* Washington, DC: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2004. http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=214 accessed February 2, 2006.

———. *Self Censorship: How Often and Why: Journalists Avoiding The News.* Washington, DC: Pew Center for the People and the Press, 2000. http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=39 [accessed February 2, 2006].

Powell, Douglas and William Leiss. *Mad Cows and Mother's Milk-The Perils of Poor Risk Communication.* Quebec City: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.

The Project for Excellence in Journalism. *The State of the News Media 2005.* Washington, DC: The Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2005. http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2005/index.asp [accessed February 4, 2006].

Quarantelli, E. L. *The Role of the Mass Communication System in Natural and Technological Disasters and possible Extrapolation to Terrorism Situations.* Newark: Disaster Research Center, University of Delaware, 2002. http://dspace.udel.edu:8080/dspace/bitstream/19716/595/1/PP2122.pdf [accessed February 1, 2006].

Rosenblatt, Susannah and Rainey, James. "Katrina Takes a Toll on Truth, News Accuracy." *Los Angeles Times*, September 27, 2005. http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-rumors27sep27,0,3794602.story?coll=la-home-headlines [accessed September 28, 2005].

Slovic, Paul, editor. *The Perception of Risk*. London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2000.

Slovic, Paul, Baruch Fischhoff, Sarah Lichtenstein. "Rating the Risks." *The Perception of Risk.* 104, 120.London: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2000.

Townsend, Frances Fragos. *Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina.* Washington DC: White House, 2006. http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned/appendix-a.html [accessed 20 May 2006].

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Communicating in a Crisis: Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials.* Washington, DC: Department of Health and Human Services, 2002.

http://www.hhs.gov/od/documents/RiskCommunication.pdf [accessed 17 October 2005].

U.S. Coast Guard. *Commandant Instruction 1514.1, Public Affairs Specialist "A" School Candidate Screening Process.* Washington, D.C.: Jun 24, 2005.

———. *Commandant Instruction M5728.2C, Public Affairs Manual*. Washington DC: U.S. Coast Guard, 2001. http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/directives/cim/cim%5F5728%5F2c.pdf [accessed 20 May 2006].

———. *Coast Guard Publication 1, U.S. Coast Guard: America's Maritime Guardian.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 2002. http://www.uscg.mil/top/about/doc/uscg_pub1_complete.pdf [accessed October 29, 2006].

———. Eighth District. *External Affairs Website*. http://www.uscg.mil/D8/ [accessed August 29, 2006].

———. Federal On-Scene Coordinator's Report*: T/V EXXON VALDEZ Oil Spill.* n.p., July 1993.

———. *Final Action on the Administrative Investigation into the Diving Mishap and the Resulting Deaths of USCGC HEALY's Crewmembers that Occurred on 17 August 2006.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard, January 10, 2006. http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/cit/cim/foia/Healy/HEALY_FAM.pdf [accessed 12 Jan 07].

———. Historian's Office. *Hurricane Katrina Timeline Spreadsheet.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office, 2005.

———. *Hurricane Information website*. www.cgstormwatch.com [accessed 17 December 2006].

———. *Marine Safety Unit Galveston Severe Weather Plan.* Galveston: U.S. Coast Guard, 2004.

U.S. Congress, House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina. *Hearing on Preparedness and Response by the State of Alabama.* Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 9, 2005. https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053106-02.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

———. *Hearing on Preparedness and Response in Louisiana.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 14, 2005. https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-052506-11.pdf [accessed October 31, 2006].

———. *Hearing on Preparedness and Response by the State of Mississippi.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 7, 2005. https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053006-01.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

———. *Hearing on the Military's Role.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 27, 2005. https://www.hsdl.org/?view=/docs/legis/nps03-053106-04.pdf [accessed October 30, 2006].

U.S. Department of Homeland Security. "Emergency Support Function #15 External Affairs Annex". *National Response Plan.* Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2004. ESF #15-1 to ESF #15-6. http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/NRP_FullText.pdf [accessed 19 October 2005].

———. *Emergency Support Function #15 Standard Operating Procedures.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Homeland Security, 2006.

———. "Public Affairs Support Annex". *National Response Plan.* Washington, DC: Department of Homeland Security, 2004. PUB-1 to PUB-16, http://www.dhs.gov/interweb/assetlibrary/NRP_FullText.pdf [accessed 19 October 2005].

U.S. Department of State, International Information Programs. *Crisis Communications.* http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/pressoffice/crisis.htm [accessed December 16, 2006].

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *National Contingency Plan, 40 CFR 300.* http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/get-cfr.cgi?TITLE=40&PART=300&SECTION=145&YEAR=2000&TYPE=TEXT [accessed December 1, 2006].

———. *National Contingency Plan Overview*. Washington, DC: Environmental Protection Agency, 2004. http://www.epa.gov/oilspill/ncpover.htm [accessed 26 Oct 2005].

———. *Risk Communication in Action, Environmental Case Studies.* Cincinnati: Environmental Protection Agency, 2002. http://www.epa.gov/ORD/NRMRL/pubs/625r02011/625r02011.pdf [accessed 26 October 2005].

———. *Public Participation in Programs Under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and the Clean Water Act. Title 40 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 25.* http://www.washingtonwatchdog.org/documents/cfr/title40/part25.html [accessed 19 October 2005].

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Emergency Response Program. *National Response Team.* Washington, DC: n.p., n.d. http://www.epa.gov/superfund/programs/er/nrs/nrsnrt.htm [accessed December 18, 2006].

U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Coast Guard: Observations on the Preparation, Response, and Recovery Missions Related to Hurricane Katrina.* Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, July 2006.http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06903.pdf [accessed October 29, 2006].

———. *Homeland Security: Communication Protocols and Risk Communication Principles Can Assist in Refining the Advisory System.* Washington DC: General Accounting Office, 2004. http://homelandsecurity.house.gov/files/GAOthreatJune2004.pdf [accessed 19 October 2005].

U.S. House of Representatives. *A Failure of Initiative. The Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina.*Washington DC: U.S. House of Representatives, 2006). http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/15feb20061230/www.gpoaccess.gov/katrinareport/conclusion.pdf [accessed 20 May 2006].

Wah, Hua-Hsin Wan and Michael Pfau. "The Relative Effectiveness of Inoculation, Bolstering, and Combined Approaches in Crisis Communication." *Journal of Public Relations Research.* Mahwah: 2004. Vol. 16, Iss. 3.

# INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST

1. Defense Technical Information Center
   Ft. Belvoir, Virginia

2. Dudley Knox Library
   Naval Postgraduate School
   Monterey, California

3. Coast Guard Historian's Office
   Coast Guard Headquarters
   Washington, District of Columbia